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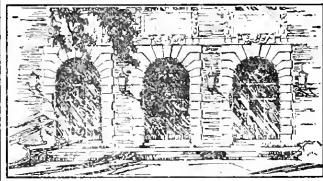
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SESQUICENTENNIAL  
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*Commemorating 150 years of growth and development in the Celestial City*

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# Prologue

Each age writes (and rewrites) its own history in terms of the values, attitudes, and emotions of that age. Playwright Arthur Miller, in his preface to *The Crucible*, said of the people involved with the Salem Witchcraft Trials, "...we can only pity them, just as we ourselves shall someday be pitied."

With that possibility in mind, we address this prologue perhaps as much to those who may read it (and the contents of this book) fifty or one hundred, or even five hundred years hence, as to those who read it "new." Our plea is not for "pity," but rather for understanding—to be judged by motive and not by action.

And the "motive" behind the publication of this book is quite basic: to present a readable, interesting overview of the 150-year history of Pekin. This chronicle is not intended to be a definitive, fully documented source authority on local history. While every effort was made at accuracy, time and space would not allow such an endeavor.

Each section of this book (and in some instances, even parts of sections) could easily serve as the basis for a publication of equal or greater length than this one. The biggest problem so far as material was concerned was what to exclude, rather than include. It is a story of people's triumphs and defeats, joys and sorrows, commissions and omissions.

It is not, however, with apologies that this publication is presented. We believe it more than adequately serves the need from which it arose. It is hoped that the book will help readers understand (and maybe even appreciate) the Celestial City. It seems logical that any hope for eventual universal, ecumenical harmony in the world must spring from an initial understanding of one's own culture and heritage.

Most of the people involved with this publication are acknowledged, but surely some have unintentionally been omitted. We want to thank each one who in any way gave of oneself to make this book possible. Truly, you have "given" in the most idealistic sense of the word.

PEKIN CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

# 9

## *The First 25 Years: An Overview*

Pekin Township has the distinction of having the first white settlement in Illinois, for on January 3, 1680, Robert de La Salle with a fleet of canoes containing 33 explorers landed on the eastern bank of the Illinois River near the present site of Creve Coeur. In the near vicinity, upon the extremity of a ridge protected by deep ravines, a winter refuge was built in what is now the southeast quarter of section one, Pekin Township.

Though frequented by travelers after that time, and inhabited by Indians before and after, the area which is now the city of Pekin was not permanently settled until the summer of 1824. It was then that Jonathan Tharp moved from Kingston and built a small log cabin on the high east bank of the river, on or close to what is now the site of Franklin School. He began farming a large area that is presently a part of downtown Pekin.

Tharp encouraged other members of his family to follow him to his "find" at the river's bend, especially after he discovered that the local residents, the Pottawatomie Indians and their kindly Chief Shabbona, were friendly. Follow they did. Tharp's father, Jacob, and a brother moved near his cabin in 1825, while Jesse Eggerman moved from Kingston where he had operated a ferry a year later. All three men constructed permanent dwellings.

Soon after their arrival, the Tharps laid out a town to be called "Cincinnati," which was bounded by the river and the present streets of Broadway, McLean and Main. There were no purchasers for their lots, however, and the area was later enveloped by the

more successful growth of "Pekin." For many years the ground on which Pekin is now located was called



*One of the founders of Pekin is La Salle. He was killed in 1680 on his last voyage to the West Indies.*

"Town Site," indicating the suitability of the spot for future development.

Pekin was laid out and surveyed by County Surveyor William Hodge in 1829. He did not have a surveyor's chain, so he made the survey with a length of knotted string. For many years to follow, land sales were complicated by variations in measurements on the original plat caused by this lack of accurate equipment.

The "Town Site" plat was taken to Springfield in 1829 and placed on sale at public auction. The story of this sale is told in many different sources with varying degrees of robustness. Perhaps as colorful an account of this event as available comes from Jacob Tharp's own journal:

When the land sales were held at Springfield, there were several claimants for the Pekin town-site. On the first day of the sale the bidding ran high, and the land was knocked down to William Haines at twenty dollars an acre; but he did not comply with the regulations of the sale, and on the second day the same tract was sold for one hundred dollars per acre. The buyer again failed to comply, and the tract was once more offered on the third day. A man in Springfield named Harrington had, in the meantime, a deadly quarrel with Major Perkins, one of the principal claimants, growing out of some delicate question. Those were chivalrous days, and he determined on revenge. So he placed himself near the auctioneer, armed to the eyebrows, and when the coveted tract was put up, he bid one dollar and twenty-five cents an acre, and swore he would blow out any man's brains who offered a higher bid. Major Perkins was stalking around the room, armed for battle and hunting blood. There was immense excitement, and death was felt in the atmosphere, but the tract was knocked down to Harrington. He complied with the regulations and walked out feeling sublime, but the Major and his friends captured the usurper, conveyed him to a room and persuaded him to make out deeds for the prize. From these papers the original title is derived.

These deeds are the original titles upon which much of the present ownership of downtown Pekin real estate is based. Among these first holders were Perkins, William Haines, Gideon Hawley, and Major Nathan Cromwell. The lots, as finally laid out in 1830, are figured to have cost 28¢ each. After the plat was completed, Mrs. Nathan Cromwell gave the city the name of *Pekin*. It is generally assumed, although never actually documented, that the town was named after the Chinese City of the Sun—Peking. Mrs. Cromwell further exercised her share of women's



Chief Shaubena, pictured in the upper lefthand corner of this photo, is said to have saved early Pekin residents from Indian massacre.

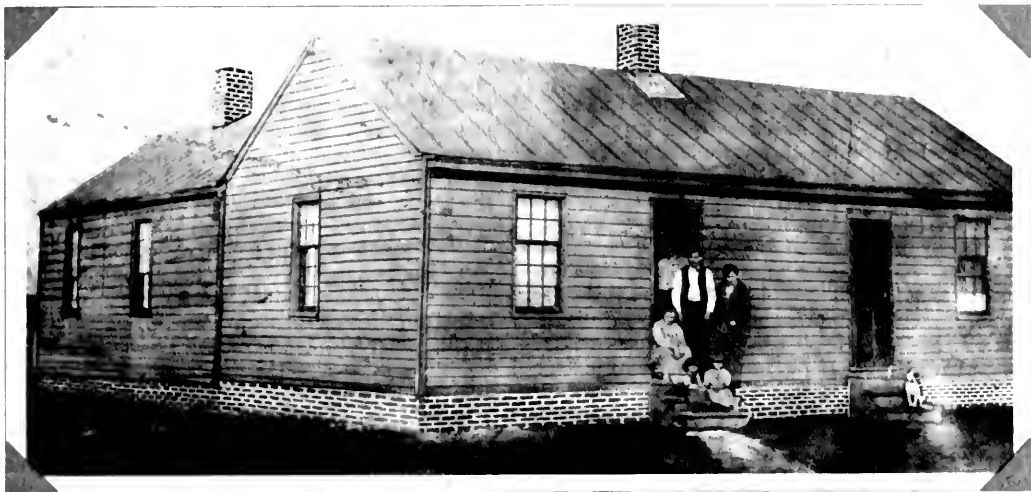
rights in those early days by naming many of the original streets, running east and west, in honor of female relatives and friends of the original settlers including "Lucinda," second wife of William Haines; "Caroline," daughter of Major Perkins; and, with all due modesty, "Ann Eliza," after herself.

There are many interesting stories, events, and personalities connected with these founding fathers—too many, in fact, to do them justice in such a short space. But at least one relic of a past age, one which has often been misquoted and misinterpreted in various publications, seems worthy of straightening out here, with facts derived from court records.

When Major Cromwell arrived here in 1828 from Sand Prairie, he either brought with him, or soon thereafter acquired, a Negro girl, about 16 years old, known only as Nancy or Nance. Although Cromwell considered her a slave, he did pay her both money and goods for her work.

Apparently Cromwell grew tired of Pekin, and he decided to head south to Texas. In the course of settling his affairs here, he "sold" Nancy to one David Bailey on June 13, 1836, for \$377. Cromwell received a promissory note for that amount, due and payable on May 1, 1837.

Unfortunately, Cromwell died in July at St. Louis, enroute to Texas. What happened to his wife, Ann Eliza, is unknown. What is known, however, is that two men were named the executors of his estate: William Cromwell, the deceased's brother, and one Alex



*This is one of Pekin's pioneer residences erected in 1835 by David Mair, who, at the time of his death in the 1860s, is reported to be the largest land owner in Tazewell County.*

McNaughton. They retained Charles Ballance, a noted Peoria attorney, and Stephen Logan as legal counsel in an attempt to collect on the note from Bailey.

Bailey, in turn, was represented by William H. Holmes, who elected to argue the case on the legality of the note rather than the legality of slavery. Holmes promptly lost the case in Tremont in 1839, and a judgment was rendered against Bailey for \$451.97.

The next step was to appeal the case. This time Holmes contacted the law firm of Stuart and Lincoln in Springfield. Abe Lincoln immediately pointed out the error of Holmes' logic, took the case, and argued the humanitarian issue before Illinois Supreme Court Justice Sidney Breese on July 23, 1841. He won the case, citing several existing statutes regarding indentured servitude in Illinois. At least one Illinois historian has stated that this case was a precedent for others to follow, but in point of fact, Lincoln cited a decision made seven months earlier by the same court he was arguing before this time.

At any rate, Nancy was "officially" free, and lived in Pekin until her death about 1875, at approximately 60 years of age. It is reported that she was highly regarded in the community, and often called upon for advice and assistance. There is no record of her place of burial, although education of her son would indicate the present site of the Quaker Oak Cemetery.

There are also other mysteries about this woman.

Several accounts make mention of her "children," but no records can be found indicating what became of them or their father, whoever he may have been. But at least the "legal" battle has been cleared and some of the "myths" surrounding this woman dispelled. We now direct our attention, once again, to the more general issues of pioneer Pekin.

Records indicate that the early settlers were industrious and went to St. Louis with their surplus produce. Hogs and cattle were driven long distances to market. The early store owners of Tazewell and Peoria County brought their goods from St. Louis by the Illinois River on flat boats. Before 1850, one or two small steamboats were operating along the river, and no regular lines were in operation until 1851. Traveling time for flat boats from Peoria to St. Louis, via the Illinois River, was 14 days. From Tazewell, via the Mississippi River, it was 10 days, but at other times the trip could be as long as 70 days.

The first flatboat landed at Tazewell Sunday, August 28, 1828, and caused great excitement among the Indian and white settlers. Local historians reported to have thought the settlers' homes then looked like a beehive, as the sound of the Americans' gunfire greeted the Indians. At the end of the trip, the crew of the flatboat was welcomed by the Indians.

One of the first flatboats to come to Tazewell was the "Enterprise," which landed at Tazewell on August 28, 1828.

his smokehouse. Two more stores followed: Absalom and Joseph Dillon brought a stock of general merchandise in early spring of 1829; and in the summer of 1830, David Bailey started an enterprise which featured dry goods, groceries, and notions.

The first commercial attempt at solving the problems of crossing the Illinois River took the form of a ferry which was made and operated by William Clarke in 1829.

On December 7, 1829, Gideon Hawley produced "good and sufficient bond" and paid two dollars into the county treasury to become the first Pekinite issued a Tazewell County liquor license; thereupon he opened the city's first permanent saloon, a combination hotel-tavern. According to records in the County Clerk's office, for about \$2¢ a traveler could bed and feed his horse, eat dinner, drink a half gallon of beer, and sleep it all off 'til morning in a private room. Another liquor license was issued to George Hinch in 1830.

It should be noted that Pekin also grew and prospered in other than commercial areas. The first school was built on Second and Elizabeth Streets in 1831 by Thomas Snell, who promptly appointed his son John the initial schoolmaster. Shortly thereafter, the elder Snell also built a warehouse for the growing steamboat trade.

Dr. Samuel Pillsbury opened his practice of medicine that same year, and in June, the county seat was moved—temporarily—from Mackinaw to Pekin. Many noted members of the Bar practiced law in the Circuit Court, which was held in the Snell School.

A post office was opened with the appointment of Robert Alexander as postmaster on February 20, 1832. Further, Methodist Church services were being held in a little building later called the Foundry Church, with the Reverend Joseph Mitchel, a most colorful and outspoken figure who will be discussed later, leading the congregation.

Thus, after only eight years of "being," the new settlement boasted, at the very least, three stores, a ferry service, two saloons, a church, a school, a County Court House, and a post office. And with the roughness and hardships of the times, rest assured that Dr. Pillsbury was, if not wealthy, at least quite busy.

With commercial ventures started, the growing river trade at its doorstep, and the coveted county seat in its possession, Pekin seemed on its way to a bright and promising future. Indeed, in time, that came, but not before the fledgling community suffered nearly two decades of adversities which severely retarded its growth and development.

The first of these disasters was the Black Hawk War

of 1832. While no hostile Indians came within 50 miles of Pekin, many worried settlers gathered in town and made preparations for defense of the community. One such effort was the fortification of the Snell School, called Fort Doolittle. It was a fitting name, not only because no battle was ever fought there, but also because no provision had been made for a water supply within the fort, so that even a short-term siege could not have been withstood.

The men mustered at Pekin under the command of Captain John Adams, however, were not so fortunate. They took part in the first battle of the war, the Battle of Sycamore, and because of the panic-stricken retreat of some undisciplined volunteers, they suffered a severe loss. Of the thirteen men killed in the conflict, nine were from the Pekin unit, including Captain Adams and Major Isaac Perkins. Adams' wife, after whom Jane Street is named, lost her mind when told of his death.

The following year, an even more disastrous event occurred: Asiatic cholera struck, causing many deaths and panic-prompted actions. Families abandoned town, leaving their possessions behind. Boats refused to stop to deliver supplies, and travelers avoided the place.

The cemetery at that time (the Tharp Cemetery) was located on the present site of Douglas School. When bodies were exhumed later for reinterment, it was discovered that many had been buried without coffins, and a number either buried hastily before they were actually dead or else with such fearful carelessness that they were interred face down.

In 1835 a group of wealthy Easterners laid out the town of Tremont, nine miles to the east, and made the tempting offer of 20 acres and \$2,000 in order to secure the county seat. Pekin, weakened by the loss of many of its leaders through war and disease, was unable to withstand the challenge, and the county government was moved to Tremont in early 1836.

In spite of the gloomy prospects, most citizens struggled on. In July of 1835, the residents voted for incorporation, and a week later chose J. C. Morgan as president of a five-man board of trustees. The town took over, successfully, operation of the Illinois River ferry; many other ventures, however, were not to meet with such success.

The second chartered railroad in the state was incorporated in 1835 as the Pekin and Tremont, later to include Danville, Urbana, and Bloomington. The project was abandoned, though, with scarcely any construction.

In 1839, the first newspaper, *The Tazewell Reporter*, was started in Pekin; it folded in only three months.



The initial bank in Pekin opened in 1840, owned by Colonel Charles Oakley. The man himself turned out to be a great success, and has a street in Chicago named for him, but his bank in Pekin, which was located in the Mark Building (the first brick structure in Pekin, built by David Mark in 1836) failed in two years.

During all this misfortune, many of Pekin's leading citizens were devoting much of their time and attention to the running bond with Tremont concerning the location of the county seat. Most of this took place in the General Assembly, and resulted in a series of petty changes in the boundaries of the county.

The next handicap to confront the town was a severe drought in the summer of 1838. There was virtually no rain during August, September, and October. Death rates rose, crops failed, and the river became so low that navigation was impossible. No steamboat stopped for over two months, compared to the normal average of ten per week. Needless to say, this took its toll on Pekin by hindering the arrival not only of incoming supplies, but also of migrating settlers.

Still, with all its hard luck, by 1843 Pekin's population had grown to a healthy 800; they did not remain healthy for long. In December of that year, another epidemic struck, this time involving erysipelas and malignant scarlatina. Within a four-month period, fifty-two people were dead, and at least 500 infected. Reports indicate that it was not unusual for a person to die in one to four hours from the onset of the symptoms.

Many people believed that this tragedy was brought about by an angry God intending to punish an ungodly people for their sins. A religion revival swept the community, and at least one new church and a tremendous growth of the Methodist congregation resulted from the many "sorethroat" revivals.

War came again to the people of Pekin in 1846 with the outbreak of the Mexican conflict, again the men of Pekin rose to the occasion. A group of volunteers from the city was organized under Captain Edward Jones, an attorney. Also prominent in command were First Lieutenant Leonard Knott and Second Lieutenant William Finney, a tough, salty Frontiersman whose exploits were much heralded in his time.

The group formed Company "C" of the Fourth Regiment of Illinois Volunteers, under General Frank Shields. The company landed at Vera Cruz and was engaged at the Battle of Cerro Gordo. The main body of the Americans engaged the Mexicans in combat. While Shields' division, including Company "C" from Pekin, were ordered on a wide-circling maneuver which took them to the rear of the enemy.

One contingent of Mexicans narrowly escaped the Pekin company, leaving behind in their hasty retreat a freshly-cooked chicken dinner, a bag of gold, and a wagon which held, among other things, the Mexican leader Santa Anna's wooden leg. A Pekin man, Sergeant John N. Gail, brought the leg back to Pekin as a souvenir of the war, and later turned it over to the state of Illinois, where it is now part of a collection of the adjutant general. The company returned in late May, 1847, after having lost Lieutenant Knott to vel-



Two firsts. Upper left: Pekin's first brick residence, built by Dr. A. H. Chase, 1836, around the block from Jones' fourth floor. Lower right: The two-story brick residence in Lewisville, built by Stephen Jones. It was the first two-story brick house in Illinois.

low fever and four other men to battle wounds.

After years of misfortunes, epidemics, wars, droughts, and general weariness, Pekin seemed due for a change of luck. It came, and 1849 was the turning point. The population had risen to 1,500, and the town's residents voted unanimously to organize under a city charter (dated August 20, 1849). On September 24, Bernard Bailey was elected mayor, heading a council of four aldermen: John Atkinson, David Kenyon, William Maus, and Jacob Rillet.

The new city prospered in other ways. The Smith Wagon Company, which was to become one of the town's major employers and builders, started business at 301 Margaret Street. Further, Jonathan Haines invented an improved mechanical reaper and built a factory at Broadway and Ninth Streets, the forerunner of many of the giant steel and farm implement manufacturers of this area. Additionally, a distillery and a pork packing plant were in operation.

One of the first acts of the newly-elected govern-

ment was to build a jail, constructed by John S. Boone, which was often utilized in the tough frontier town made up of original settlers, Indians, veterans of two wars, river men, farmers, and the first few industrious German immigrants who were to play such an important role in the city's progress.

The community still had a reputation as a disease-ridden, rough, sometimes-lawless river town, but the necessary first steps had been taken and the initial seeds of development planted. While the outlook for the future may not have loomed bright, light could be seen at the end of the tunnel.

From this point on, Pekin's development becomes multi-faceted and sophisticated. Thus, rather than attempt to lump these many and diverse areas together, the book at this point will present many of these phases and stages as individual units or topics. We aren't closing the door here; we are merely opening about a dozen others.

## 2 *Churches*

Today, we send missionaries to the underdeveloped areas of the world, and it probably seems strange to talk about our modern, bustling city as a mission field, but that is exactly what it once was. The religious needs of Pekin's early residents were first served by circuit-riding missionaries.

The Harps had become Methodists before they left Ohio, and so Jacob Harp welcomed a circuit-riding Methodist missionary, Reverend Jesse Walker, into his log cabin in 1826 to conduct Town Site's first preaching service. Soon Walker and Harp organized a twelve-member class, and Methodist meetings were held in members' homes, led occasionally by Sangamon circuit riders, such as the renowned Methodist Peter Cartwright (who later entered politics and defeated 22-year-old Abraham Lincoln in the 1832 bid for a General Assembly seat).

For the most part, though, members led the services themselves until fiery, plainspoken Joseph Mitchel was installed in 1829 as the congregation's first minister. Father Mitchel was a very strict leader of his flock, and a couple of anecdotes illustrating just how strict seem appropriate here. On one occasion some of the younger members of the congregation produced a bass viol to provide accompaniment for the singing. No sooner had they begun to tune up than Father Mitchel was on his feet, crying, "What's this! What's this!" Informed of the young men's intentions, he replied, "No such thing! No such thing! It's an ungodly great fiddle, take it out! Take it out!" Thus it would seem fairly certain that Pekin's first choir, consisting of seven male voices brought together

in Mitchel's church, sang without accompaniment.

Father Mitchel was even less receptive to competition than he was to "fiddle" music. He showed much consternation when a Reverend Carey, a very articulate, brilliant, charming evangelist from Cincinnati, began to hold meetings across the street from Father Mitchel's services. Although many of the congregation felt compelled to hear this great speaker, they were so impressed by Mitchel's disapproval that they went to great lengths to sneak into the evangelist's meetings. Father Mitchel would pace the aisles of his church with his eye on the entrance to the residence across the street, and every time another wayward soul crossed its threshold, he would interrupt whatever he was saying to remark, "There's another one gone to hell."

There are many more stories about this notorious gentleman, but his church now demands our attention, for it was under Reverend Mitchel's guidance that Pekin's first church building was erected in the 1830's on the north side of Elizabeth between Capitol and Third Streets. In an attempt to raise funds for the proposed two-story building, Jacob Harp returned to Ohio, where he managed to raise \$100. Unfortunately, he spent \$200 on the trip, so only the lower half of the building could be completed. The congregation fondly called the building the "little brick church," but in later years it became known as the "foulsly church," apparently because of its proximity to such an establishment.

The congregation soon outgrew this first Methodist Episcopal Church, but so it was known until the 1930's.

copal was dropped in 1939), so in 1847 it was sold to Jewett and Baker, who used it as a livery stable; and a new frame church on the east side of North Capitol between Court and Margaret was dedicated. Timbers and sills for the framework of this building were hauled by oxen from a little M. E. church in Elm Grove township, and the church's bell had an even longer journey. Captured from the tower of a Roman Catholic Convent at Vera Cruz, Mexico, by four Pekinians who served in the Mexican War, it was packed with straw in an old flour barrel and carted home as a gift for the new church. For 20 years the peculiar tones of its cracked chimes not only called Methodists to worship, but also sounded an alarm for local fires, until it was returned to Catholicism with its sale in 1867 to the English Roman Catholic Church of Pekin. Perhaps some members later regretted their efforts, for when the congregation became too large for this building, it was sold to David Lowery, who converted it to a combination billiard parlor and saloon.

The building which replaced the frame church was constructed on the southwest corner of South Fourth and Broadway, and with considerable expansion and remodeling, it served the congregation from 1867 to 1954. Then the church moved to its present location overlooking Mineral Springs Park Lagoon on the corner of 14th and Court. The first little M. E. church with 12 members has grown to include 1,752 people and control property valued at approximately half a million dollars. Today's ministers are Reverend William Priett and Reverend Arthur Wooley.

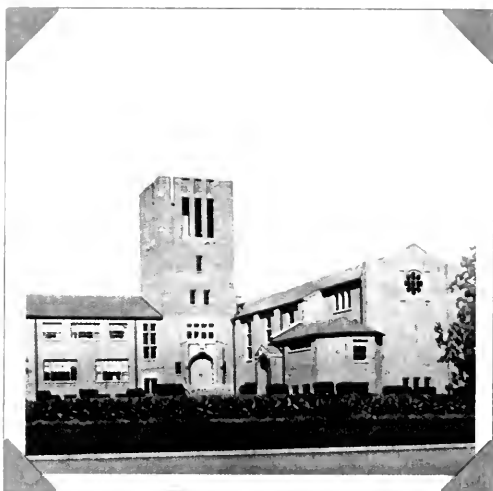
From its very beginnings a pattern of migration to the new community developed, and the organization of Pekin's fledgling churches follows the pattern closely. The first settlers were mostly of English-speaking heritage, and so the "first" churches of each denomination—First Methodist, First (Dutch) Reformed, First Baptist—were composed of predominantly English-speaking congregations. The "second" churches, though, were organized as a result of a later German migration, and theirs were German-speaking congregations—German Methodist, Second Baptist (now Calvary), and Second Reformed. In fact, for two years, from 1870 until 1872, the original Methodist Episcopal Church was known as the English M. E. because its pastor, James W. Haney, was the only English-preaching minister in Pekin. (The other English churches were without permanent ministers at that time.)

The first of the German denominations to develop was the German Methodist Episcopal. The English Methodist circuit riders were followed by German M.

E. missionaries using a similar approach, but with one unique difference—they rode the Illinois River Circuit out of St. Louis by steamboat, using horses



*At its South Fourth and Broadway address, the English Methodist Church was right across the street from the Presbyterian, and in summer the two ministers exchanged pulpits to allow for each to take a short vacation.*



*Today, the Methodist Church stands just a few yards south to the location of the first Mineral Springs park pool.*

only to travel inland from their landings all along the river front.

Thus it was that German Methodist Daniel Bristol came to Pekin in 1843. He and two later missionaries organized meetings in various Pekin homes until the German Methodist Episcopal Church was officially organized in 1848. The first church building was a small frame structure erected in 1850, and the English M. E. Church donated their old church seats to the new congregation. The growing number of members soon needed more room and moved to a larger building in 1854.

In 1874 a brick structure of Gothic design was erected on the site of the present church on the corner of North Fourth and State Streets. The new building housed not only a leading congregation of the St. Louis Methodist Conference, but also Lapeere County's first pipe organ. Young boys from the congregation were called upon to "pump up the air" every Sunday to supply enough air for the organist to play throughout the entire morning service.

The year 1911 held dual catastrophes for the German M. E. congregation. On May 28 a cyclone blew down the church's imposing steeple, and on Decem-

ber 6 the entire building was destroyed by fire. Members of the congregation at the scene of the fire later recalled how the 900-pound bell groined as it fell through several levels before coming to rest. It was melted down into many smaller hand-sized bells which were sold to help finance the reconstruction.

For two years the congregation met in the Lapeere County Court House until the present building was dedicated March 29, 1914. In the meantime, a significant change was taking place.

Increasingly aware of their new heritage, this German congregation took a leading role in Americanizing Pekin's German community. An English Sunday School had already been meeting for some time, when the congregation voted to hold English church services as well. It cost them some members, but on November 15, 1912, the congregation became the Grace Methodist Episcopal Church.

The change even affected the construction of the new building. The cornerstone was laid in 1912. Be-



A view of the new Grace Methodist Episcopal Church in Pekin, Illinois, showing the steeple and the main entrance.



Underneath the steeple of the church is a large bell which was melted down into many smaller hand-sized bells which were sold to help finance the reconstruction.

cause of the uncertainty surrounding the outcome of the November vote, the church's name was not carved on the stone—only the date, 1912. In later years, Dr. Joseph Mason, well-known to Pekinites of all denominations during his long ministry here (1955-1972), would tell his congregation that although he wasn't born in Pekin, he appreciated their inscribing his birth year on the church's cornerstone.

There were two other name changes—to Grace Methodist in 1939 when all Methodists dropped "Episcopal," and to Grace United Methodist in 1965 with the union of Methodist and United Brethren denominations. At the present time, Reverend James K. White and Reverend Harold Simpkins serve a membership of 1,548.

It was not long before the two Methodist churches were joined by other denominations. Pekin's first "Sabbath School" was founded in 1837 and soon grew into a short-lived Presbyterian Church of Pekin and Sand Prairie. In 1843 Daniel Bailey, a member of already disbanded congregation, happened upon a Reverend A. D. Wilson on a steamboat trip to St. Louis. Wilson proposed the establishment of a Dutch Reformed Church with a Presbyterian form of government in Pekin. Bailey and the nine other original members were agreeable and met in each other's homes until their first building was completed in 1847 in the 100 block of Sabella.

This new church was plagued by indebtedness and lack of leadership, but it struggled on and by 1861 had a permanent minister and a new parsonage on the present site of St. Joseph's School.

A few years later the membership, which had increased by as many as 40 a day during the great revival of 1866, was depleted by the withdrawal of some of the congregation's most wealthy and influential members in an unsuccessful attempt to establish a Congregational Church. (A later disassociation in 1907 was more effective and gave birth to the present Congregational denomination, which just dedicated a new building on Parkway and Sheridan, March 31 of this year.)

Under the leadership of Reverend E. P. Livingston, the congregation was re-united and strengthened by the addition of Presbyterians new to the community; and on October 10, 1875, the membership moved into a new building next to the corner lot of South Fourth and Broadway, under a new name, the American Reformed Church. An imposing structure, it was a familiar Pekin landmark until it was removed in 1965 to make room for the Everett M. Dirksen Congressional Leadership Research Center.

In 1914 a congregational meeting again voted to change the church's name, and it became the First Presbyterian Church. In 1964 the church moved to its present location at 1717 Highwood. There, Reverend William E. Rice ministers to a congregation of 385.

From 1850 on, many new churches were founded, among them, St. Paul's Episcopal. St. Paul's parish moved to Pekin with the county seat; established in Tremont, the parish came to Pekin in 1850, the year of the county seat's return. The parish was admitted to the Diocese of Illinois in 1851, but Episcopal services were held in Pekin as early as 1837.

Various locations between the river and Fourth Street served the congregation until the present building on the northwest corner of Washington and Buena Vista was erected in 1874. The architecture of this building (Pekin's oldest church building still occupied by its original denomination) is noteworthy, particularly the ceiling of the nave, which was painted in water color and embellished in gold leaf be-



*The congregation of St. Paul's Episcopal Church occupies the oldest of the city's present-day church buildings.*

tween 1910 and 1920 by H. D. Martins of Peoria. The present pastor is Reverend Roy B. Davis, and the congregation numbers 331.

Four members organized the First Baptist Church in 1850 under the pastorship of the Reverend Gilbert S. Bailey. Re-organized in 1852, the church purchased two lots on the corners of Fifth and Elizabeth Streets and the first building was begun in 1854. Shortly after construction started, Abraham Lincoln, then a Springfield lawyer and a personal friend of Reverend Bailey, signed the consecration list and contributed \$10 to the building fund.

In the late 1940's it became obvious that the congregation was simply outgrowing its much-renovated home. Therefore, the entire block on the west side of 700 North Fourth was purchased for the construction of a new church and parsonage, dedicated in 1955. Property acquisition has continued, the latest additions being a wing for a new sanctuary, expanded educational facilities, and a modernized kitchen, all of which were dedicated in 1971. At the present time, Reverend Albert L. Kurz, assisted by Reverend John White, serves a congregation of 775.

A Universalist Church was also organized in 1851, but it disbanded after about 25 years. The Universalist building later housed the fledgling Christian Church and today belongs to the congregation of the Free Methodist denomination.

On the first Sunday in Advent, 1852, the first 49 members of St. Johannes Evangelical Lutheran Church (now St. John's) held their initial public divine service. The congregation worshipped in members' homes and in a store on Main Street for about 18 months, until a lot on the southeast corner of Fourth and Ann Eliza was acquired early in 1853 for the construction of the first house of worship.

Reverend H. Mattfeldt of Hamburg, Germany, served as the first pastor, and services were conducted in German. In June of 1917, the congregation voted to hold English services in the evening once every two weeks, and gradually German services were phased out altogether.

During 1871, a new church building was erected across the street from the old one, which was then used as a parochial school, sanctuary, Sunday School, and teacher's residence. Rebuilt in 1902, the building burned in 1928.

One of the church's early ministers was the Reverend Henry Liescheidt, son of Mr. and Mrs. Conrad Liescheidt, the only member of St. John's to enter the ministry, be installed and ordained in his home church, and also serve as its interim pastor.

The present Gothic style building was dedicated in 1927, and stands on the corner of Court, Eighth, and Broadway on a lot purchased through the endowment fund of the Block Sisters. Today's 1,471 members are led by Reverend Thomas R. Daly.

In 1857 the congregation of St. John's experienced a certain amount of dissension. As a result of this unrest, a large number of members withdrew and became instrumental in forming St. Paul's German Evangelical Church, organized on December 12, 1858. Services held in various members' homes were conducted by members of the Church Council until the first minister, Reverend C. W. Lipp, was secured. On March 27, 1859, he conducted his first Pckm service in the First Baptist Church on Elizabeth Street, where the congregation met for about seven months until a lot on the corner of Seventh and Ann Eliza Streets was purchased in 1859. Construction soon began on a combination church and school, with living quarters for the pastor in the rear, dedicated on November 6 of the same year.

As membership increased, the old building was no longer large enough, and so it was moved in 1877 to a lot west of the parsonage to make room for a new brick church dedicated November 4 of that year. Church history was made in 1914 when the women of the congregation were given the right to vote on church affairs.

On February 28, 1926, the present parish house was dedicated. The building has not only housed any number of activities and organizations of the church, but also has been opened to the public for use in many nondenominational ways.

On June 26, 1934, St. Paul's Evangelical Synod united with the Reformed Church in the United States to form the Evangelical and Reformed Church. A later union in June of 1957 with the Congregational Church resulted in the present name, St. Paul United Church of Christ. The present church building, located on the corner of Eighth, Margaret, and Broadway, was dedicated February 15, 1955. Pastor Galen E. Russell, Jr., has served the present congregation of 1,250 since 1969.

Early records indicate that Pckm residents sought a Catholic Church as early as 1859; and it is reported, but not authenticated, that a St. Stephen's Chapel was built shortly thereafter. The first reliable report of Catholicism in Pckm is a record of a baptism on November 11, 1860, during a period of time in which missionaries from Peoria served the congregation.

In 1863 the forerunner of today's St. Joseph's Catholic Church was built on the corner of Second

Sister Mary Joseph at a "red velvet" marker. The first permanent pastor was appointed in 1867.

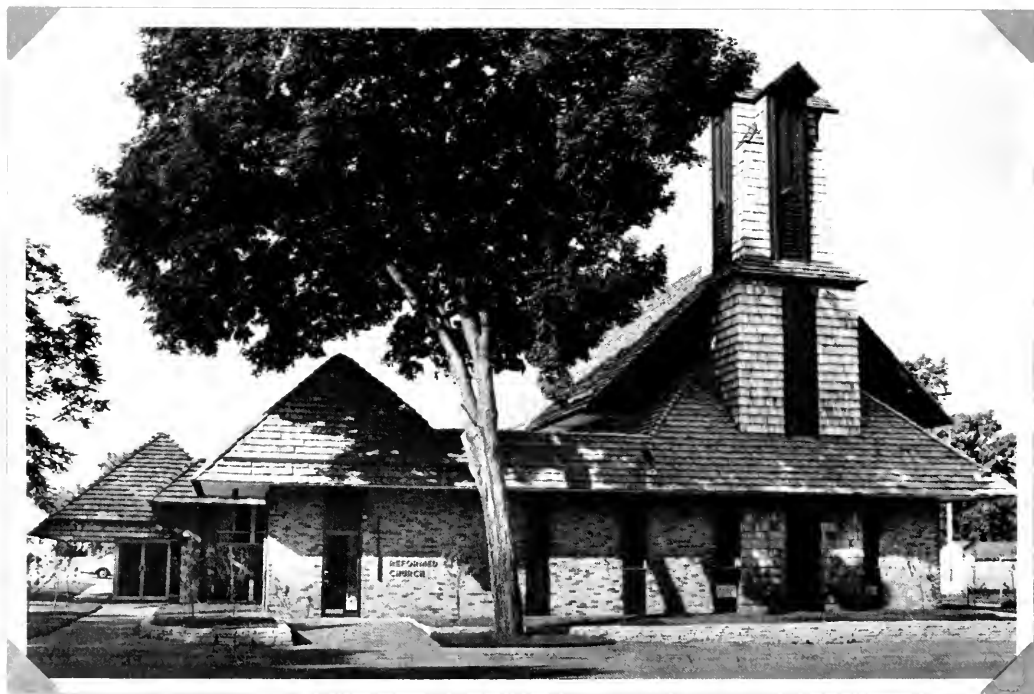
A second Catholic Church was organized in 1872. The Sacred Heart Parish contained not only a German-speaking church, but also a German parochial school. In the early 1930's the church building was destroyed by fire, but the congregation cleaned up the then-vacant Sacred Heart school in the back of the church lot and held services there until the parish merged with St. Joseph's in 1937.

On October 16, 1904, a new church on the corner of Bro. Elias and South Seventh was dedicated, but was razed in recent years to make room for the present structure. Located on the same site and dedicated in October of 1968, Today, Father John Patrick Dean and his assistants, Father Charles Beebe and Father Daniel Smith, administer a parish serving approximately 1,200 families. The parish has the distinction of operating the city's only remaining parochial school, a six-grade elementary institution with 12

classrooms and a state-of-the-art gym, and the Franciscan Sisters of Peoria.

The birth of today's First Christian Church resulted largely from the efforts of one man, Joseph Thett, who migrated to Tazewell County from West Virginia in 1869 with his wife and seven children. The Thetts soon became involved in Pekin's church-life, but after one of Thett's nieces attended a revival in Tremont, they began to gather together a congregation more similar to the Disciples of Christ, to which they belonged in their home state. As the movement grew, Thett invited visiting ministers from Laureka College to Pekin, and these sessions led to the establishment of the local church in 1876. The congregation was known as the Church of Christ until October 2, 1926, when the present name was adopted. The first building was dedicated November 18, 1883, on the corner of Broadway and Elizabeth to serve a congregation then numbering 112.

Under the leadership of Reverend Donald Ridge-



St. Joseph's Church, located on Bro. Elias and South Seventh, was razed in recent years to make room for the present structure of the First Christian Church, constructed in 1968.



way, the present church building was constructed at 1201 Chestnut Street in 1973, replacing the old 1,000 and including the old fourth and fifth street church Halls. Throughout the years since Mr. Hett lost the movement to form a congregation, the family has remained affiliated in some form to the church. The ground on which the present church stands was given to the congregation by Hett's granddaughter, Mrs. George Bush, in memory of her great-grandson, James Bush, who was killed in World War II. The land is part of the farm on which one of Hett's daughters raised her family, and part of the building fund for the present church was a gift from the will of the youngest of the founder's children.

This year marks the 100th anniversary of Pekin's Second Reformed Church, organized July 26, 1874, by a group of German immigrants. The first and only building for this congregation was constructed on the corner of State and Sixth Streets in 1876. Faced with the decision of whether to remodel or construct a new building, the congregation has recently undertaken a major renovation of the old church, thus preserving one of Pekin's oldest landmarks.

For many Pekin residents, Second Reformed is known as the Dutch Church because of the life story for Everett M. Dirk, an official of the service. Everett and his twin brother, Tenney, all of whom Everett was about 16, it was their responsibility to pump up the air for the organ and also took the two coal stoves that stood on either side of the sanctuary. The stoves are gone now, and the organ has been replaced, but the congregation of 250, led by Reverend Ralph Cordes, still meets in the same building.

The German Baptist (Calvary Baptist today) is the first of Pekin's "second" churches to organize before the turn of the century. Preaching services were held as early as 1870, although formal organization of the first 16 members did not occur until 1877. The first place of worship was a rented room in a residence on the corner of Sixth and Catherine. Later, the entire building was purchased and housed the congregation until the present edifice on the northwest corner of 10th and Caroline was dedicated in December of 1892.

All church business and services were conducted in German until May 1, 1918, when the congregation voted to change to English. Also during World War I, "German" was deleted from the church's name, and it was known as Second Baptist until July 1, 1930, when the present title was adopted.

Calvary Baptist pastor, Reverend Robert J. En-

kins, said that the church has been a "strong force" in the life of the community. Under the leadership of his predecessors and himself, he has seen the church grow from 16 to 250 members, and he has seen the congregation through the years move from a small, one-story, Civil War-era building.

A Salvation Army mission in 1885 and the Union Mission established in 1898 also aid in ministering to the religious needs of the community. The Union Mission was begun as a Sunday School for needy children not participating in church-related activities. Soon it grew to include some of the city's most noted citizens, many of whom played in the renowned Mission orchestra. Today, the familiar building on Court



After the Congregational Church vacated its town hall, the hierarchy, the members in turn, moved from the old building into the new structure on the corner of State and Sixth streets, and the new church pictured here was erected at the corner of Parkway and Willow.





*The Union Mission offers its patrons the use of a large auditorium, gym, reading rooms, and meeting areas*

and Second Streets serves as not only a religious center, but also a much used recreational facility for both youth and adults.

The Salvation Army located in a building on Court Street when it first came to Pekin, but in 1943, the organization moved to the present site at 239 Derby. Since that time, a great deal of expansion has taken place. The most recent addition, now under construction, will house a community outreach program, directed especially toward youth and senior citizens. Supported in part by the United Fund because of its many nondenominational services to the community, the Salvation Army is also a church in its own right, and presently has about 70 members under the leadership of Captain and Mrs. Robert C. Arthur.

Pekin has come a long way since its first churches were founded. The song leaders who hummed each line of the hymns before the congregation joined in with the words have been replaced by impressive organs or pianos. The old waterbucket in the entryway with its community dipper hanging on a nearby wall has given way to "more sanitary" modern plumbing. And many contemporary Pekinites will probably refuse to believe that some churches' pews were once sectioned off and enclosed by gates with keys that

were rented to members of the congregation on a monthly basis. (Of course, those who couldn't afford to rent a pew could sit in the back for free.)

Of much more far-reaching significance than the above-mentioned changes is the increasing sense of ecumenicalism arising from the desire of many churches to minister to the entire community. The Pekin Ministerial Alliance, made up, in recent years, of clergy from about 30 different congregations (both Protestant and Catholic) as well as some retired pastors, is a group that has developed from such motives, and has served the community in a number of different ways.

Until the public grade schools incorporated a kindergarten program in 1952, the Alliance co-ordinated a kindergarten through St. Paul United Church of Christ (then Evangelical and Reformed); it was funded by local industries. Today the Alliance provides a chaplain to call on patients at Pekin Hospital who are not affiliated with a particular congregation. Also, member pastors provide devotional thoughts on the theme "Consider This" on one minute of daily air time donated by WSIV immediately preceding its noon news. Finally, each Halloween, youth from member churches of the Alliance collect funds for

the United Nations Children's Emergency Fund - UNICEF, netting several hundred dollars annually. These ongoing programs are supplemented by any number of smaller projects organized to benefit the community.

These, then, are Pekin's pioneer churches, which have been joined with an ever-increasing number of denominations over the years, many of which are engaged in re-locating or expanding their facilities.

Space does not permit even a superficial discussion of those churches founded after 1900. However, a list of these churches, together with their current location, minister, and enrollment follows.



*Pekin's newest church building, Assembly of God, located on Parkway, just behind Willow School.*

<i>Church</i>	<i>Location</i>	<i>Minister</i>	<i>Enrollment</i>
Free Methodist	1011 Veerman St.	Rev. L. R. Tutting	35
Bethel Mennonite	R. R. 2	Rev. Grant Noll	65
Congregational Church of Christ	Parkway and Willow	Rev. L. F. Werner	250
First Church of the Nazarene	1100 Hamilton St.	Rev. John Davis	298
Pekin Bible Church	2405 Court St.	Rev. Harold Pothoven Rev. C. O. Grubbs	300
Congregation of Jehovah's Witnesses	904 North 10th St.	Committee of Elders	160
First Assembly of God	1209 Parkway Drive	Rev. Ronald Callahan Rev. Gary Grogan	200
Trinity Lutheran	700 South Fourth St.	Rev. Darwood Kesschmayer	1,136
Normandaic Reformed	2001 South Second St.	Rev. Charles Dunnville	196
Grace Baptist	1400 Derby St.	Rev. Charles Hamden	121
Liberty Baptist	2105 Sheridan Road	Rev. J. Wayne Nelson	355
Sixteenth Street Church of Christ	1112 16th St.		95
Faith Baptist	1501 Howard Court	Dr. Henry Sorenson Rev. David Sorenson	700
Schaefferville General Baptist	1518 Hillview Drive	Rev. Frank Noves	90
Church of Christ	1216 South 13th St.	Jerry Henderson	70
Our Savior Lutheran	2225 Sheridan Road	Rev. Philip L. Hengen	350
New Testament Missionary Baptist	State and Windsor	Elder William C. Hanson	105
Bethel Baptist	Broadway Road	Dr. Loren Dawson, Jr.	350
First Pentecostal Church of God	501 South Third St.	Rev. L. R. Sutterfield	10
Zion Baptist Church	1320-22 South Fifth St.	Rev. Charles Everly	200
Reorganized Church of Latter Day Saints	1605 Market Street	Elder Ron McCaless	126
Hebron Missionary Baptist	1208 Maple Street	Rev. Douglas Sanford	34
Christian Scientist	718 Court Street	Elected Readers	
Parkway Christian Church	2221 Parkway Drive	Mr. Jeff Thompson	200
United Faith Missionary Baptist	205 Jane Street		28
First Church of God	116 Capitol St.	Rev. Harry Glidewell	90
Mount Carmel Bible	1307 Derby St.	Rev. Leland Smalley	40

Various congregations throughout the city independently broadcast their Sunday morning services, and nearly all also sponsor Vacation Bible Schools for two weeks during the summer months, as well as Girl and Boy Scout programs during the school year. Furthermore, two of Pekin's churches provide community day care centers. Thus today's churches remain an important and viable part of the growing city.

The 1970's have given rise to some interesting new trends in religion. A kind of religious fervor is seemingly sweeping the country, especially among youth, and Pekin is no exception to this. The term "Jesus Freaks," is often used to describe these young people who appear to lean toward a more unstructured, evangelistic approach to religion. The "main line" denominations are, at best, holding their own, while many new groups which are either very conservative or very liberal by standards of the last 25 years are

growing fast.

Also, many churches are beginning to utilize the available mass media to "advertise" themselves. Many newspaper and television commercials proclaim various and sundry programs, speakers, guest lecturers, and revivals. Bumper stickers on automobiles are quite common—some nondenominational, such as "Honk if you love Jesus," others specifically designed for an individual church.

One of the most controversial religious productions in recent years was the movie, *Jesus Christ Superstar*, based on a "rock opera" of the same name. It has been proclaimed as everything from outright heresy to significant insight into contemporary religious interpretation. Only time will tell the full effects of these present trends, which many label as "fad," and others call a portent of things to come.

## 3 *Transportation*

It is, perhaps, unfair to suggest that any single phase of Pekin's development is more important than another. But it also seems logical to suggest that without the means to move people and products from one place to another, growth of a city would be virtually impossible.

Thus, the importance of transportation and the effects of its expansion and sophistication on our city cannot be overstated. Today, cars and trucks routinely travel in excess of a mile per minute, jet planes make travel to any part of the world possible in a matter of hours, and we are told that "tourist" flights to the moon and other celestial bodies will take place before the end of this century.

However, the development of transportation to its present state was a slow and tedious experience, that growth in Pekin is what we now wish to consider. It's a wide-ranging field, encompassing such areas as streets, trolleys, railroads, steamships, rivers, and bridges, to name but a few.

To give some idea of conditions of travel in the pioneer days, the following letter, written in 1855, by one Ellen Bigelow of Massachusetts is quoted. Her journey from that "advanced" Eastern state to central Illinois consumed over a month and included stage coaches to Albany, New York, the old Erie Canal to Buffalo, and a Great Lake steamer that nearly foundered twice on its voyage to Chicago. We'll let Miss Bigelow tell the story of the first leg of her journey out of Chicago.

We left Chicago in the stage for Ottawa, a route of 80 miles across the prairie, and such

traveling never did we behold before. The low prairie about Chicago was entirely flooded with water, and the creeks were swollen to rivers. Nothing in the shape of a bridge greeted our eyes. Streams, large and small, were all to be forded even to the risk of sticking fast in them. On the banks of the Des Plaines, about 10 miles from Chicago, we found a multitude of Indians, gathered for the great council they have been holding. A more horrible set of grim visages I never beheld. We left Chicago at 5 o'clock Saturday morning and were until 4 o'clock Sunday morning reaching Ottawa. In the course of time, we were completely mired six times. If you have ever seen Basil Hall's engravings, or rather caricatures from his descriptions you have a good idea of the scrapes we got into on the Illinois prairies. In the middle of a deep slough or swale as they call them, you must fancy the coach buried in mud and water above the wheels. The gentlemen all out with their coats off, pantaloons and shirt sleeves rolled up and standing in water about three feet deep, ready to carry the ladies across upon their backs, or in other way agreeable to the parties. That being done they set their shoulders to the wheels of the carriage, the horses kicking and plunging to extricate themselves from the mire, and the driver lashing them right and left and swearing in true stage driver style. You can imagine what delightful business it must have been to pack ourselves back again, covered as we all were with mud, and nine crowded into a carriage designed for only six, and confining only two seats, is an instance of inefficiency which characterizes the people of Illinois.

Such were the impressions of an "effete" Easterner on encountering the plains of Illinois. Overlooking the air of superiority which the latter evokes, one can partially understand the incredible problems that pioneer Pekinites had with transportation by land. Progress was slow, but it came.

Before the coming of the white man, the Indians in our area used paths made by buffalo between the Mackinaw and the Illinois Rivers. One Indian trail ran past the Wilson Farm, present site of the Sommer Brothers Seed Company property. The first highway in the county was authorized in 1830 by an act of the State Legislature, it ran from Pekin to Danville, following the present line of the Penn Central Railroad, and was known as the Danville and Fort Clark road. By 1837 two stage coaches crossed Tazewell County: one running from Mackinaw to Ottawa, the other from Springfield to Lake Peoria, by way of Lincoln. In 1861 a plank road was built from Pekin to Bloomington at an average cost of \$15,000 per mile.

Progress continued slowly, with several gravel roads crossing Tazewell County, affording Pekinites limited access to their county neighbors. It was not until 1913 that the State Legislature passed an Act which creat-

ed the present County system of roads. This same bill initiated the office of County Superintendent of Highways. The Superintendent is appointed by the County Board of Supervisors, has the same status of any elected county official, and also becomes a deputy to the Chief Highway Engineer of the State. The roads, technically, are called State Aid Routes, serving as supplemental thoroughfares to Illinois State Highways, but are under control of the County Board. Today most of these roads are of blacktop construction, although some of the older oiled-gravel types still exist. It should be noted also that this county system is responsible for building and maintaining any necessary bridges.

Further, state and federal highways serve the people of Pekin. Probably the greatest undertaking in road construction in recent history has been the development of "interstate highways," massive multiple-lane roads that accommodate both private and commercial forms of transportation. Beautifully landscaped with rest areas provided, these colossal concrete thoroughfares are a far cry from the rut-filled paths that carried pioneer Pekinites.

Also a far cry from those early days are the streets



*The old "Tremont Road" has grown into this four-lane highway, Route 9, showing going east on Court Street into Pekin's ever-expanding East Side.*

of the city itself. A discussion of the development of Pekin's streets and sidewalks will follow, but first it seems appropriate to attempt an explanation—especially for newcomers—of the unusual mixture of triangular intersections, jogs, and other odd features of the layout of city streets.

In 1831 (after the land auction in Springfield discussed in the Overview) two rival land-owning groups plotted their ground next to each other, using different layouts. One plotted the town of "Cincinnati," using a strict north-south grid; the second group plotted the town of "Pekin," following the line of the Illinois River bank, which resulted in a northeast/southwest grid.

Other land owners who acquired their property after the 1829 land auction did not develop their holdings into lots immediately. When they did (during the mid-1830's), they followed the north/south grid established by "Cincinnati" Broadway, which followed the grid system of Cincinnati, separated the two original street systems. Court Street was the only thoroughfare extending out of "Pekin" into "Cincinnati"; the intersection of this northwest-southeast street with "Cincinnati's" north-south ones accounts for many of the confusing intersections west of Eighth Street.

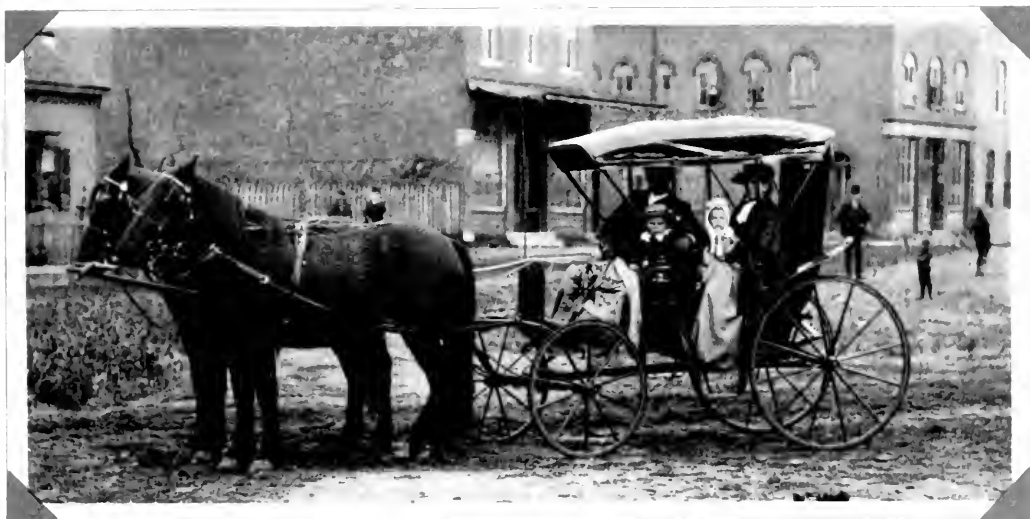
When the County Seat was moved to Pekin from

MacKays, the "grid" of "Cincinnati" was added in addition to the town of Pekin by an Act of the State Legislature; hence, our present system of unusual street layouts in the older part of Pekin. A re-reading of this section with a city map in hand would prove beneficial if you are still confused.

The physical appearance of the streets changed very little over a 55-year period from the settling of the city until the 1880's. The streets were just open areas of earth, inches deep in dust during dry weather and deeper yet in mud when it was wet. Court Street sidewalks were made of two-inch lumber, while side streets were afforded only one-inch.

Apparently there was a sidewalk tax, for records show that in 1875, one Fred Schaefer was granted exemption from the tax since his sidewalk was examined and found to be suitable. Generally, the sidewalks were nothing but a source of constant trouble, and one of the principal pastimes of the City Council was approving claims of people injured on broken walks. Heavy rains would float the planks away when they were needed most, and there were no sewers and little natural drainage of any kind. At one time, the sidewalks around the court house were officially proclaimed unsafe.

After two years of badgering from citizens com-



*One is led to assume that the Hessel family pictured here (as a Sunday outing for a wedding) is the "court" family in such pictures as they are wearing would have been sheer folly. The building in the right background is the old Central Hotel.*



*These workmen are laying the brick on Court Street in the general vicinity of Larkin's Bakery. (Date: today)*

planning about horse- and cow-running loose on the streets of the city day and night, the City Council decided to take "decisive" action. So, in 1877, an ordinance was passed that henceforth "horse and other cattle" would not be allowed at large on the streets from nine o'clock at night until five in the morning.

This same kind of forthright action was exhibited again in 1879, when a group of Court Street merchants had their petition for cobblestone paving rejected. The Council was "pleased to learn that the business men were willing to contribute for a pavement"; however, in view of the fact that Court Street was in a bad condition "only a few months of each year," it seemed unnecessary.

Things began to change noticeably and rapidly with the coming of the 1880's. The city spent nearly \$20,000 to build curb and gutter on Court Street from the river to Sixth Street and install a sewer system on Court from Third Street to the river. Extension of the curbing and sewers continued throughout the period, as it has ever since, and the plank sidewalks were replaced with brick. Cobblestone crossings were later added at main intersections. Street signs were erected, and for the first time the city undertook to number the houses and building establishments on the various streets. (House numbering was a problem which plagued Pekin for nearly 100 years; "final" systematization of numbering was made last year by the City Council in cooperation with utility companies and fire chiefs.)

The Gay Nineties saw the implementation of the first brick street in Pekin: Court Street from Fifth to the river. Extensions of brick paving continued all through the period and into the Twentieth Century.

In the late 1920's the city authorized the paving of a huge area of Pekin's north side. The work, done by the local firm of Jansen and Schaefer, cost over \$264,000 and involved the first extensive use of cement for streets. Progress continued, with a few minor disputes in the late 1930's regarding sewer construction on Derby Street which resulted in a court decision on July 30, 1937, that slashed the proposed assessment by 50%. The early 1950's saw great improvements made in Pekin street conditions with the undertaking of a half-million dollar project of resurfacing and paving.

Today's headlines still deal occasionally with proposals for street improvements. One such effort is now underway to secure \$2.3 million to relocate the railroad tracks which cross through downtown Pekin via Third Street. And, of course, there are plenty of streets in need of repair; it seems to be a never-ending battle. Recently, citizens have been upset over the fact that some dogs and cats run loose on Pekin streets—a little different from cows and horses, but nevertheless a problem. All in all, though, the system of roads and streets for the city seems adequate, with plans for future improvement in the offing.

One other area of Pekin's "Street" transportation should be discussed here before moving on to other



modes of travel: mass transportation, made up of old street cars and the present bus service.

A familiar song of trolley cars goes: ding, ding, clang, clang went the trolley, ding, ding, clang from the bell . . . and so it was in 1912 when the first street railway began in Pekin. Initially a private business, the line consisted of one battery-operated car that ran on track from Capitol Street near Court to the "Distillery Road." Each night the car batteries were charged to get ready for the next day's run. The ill-fated line lasted but two years before financial problems forced it out of business.

But all was not lost for trolley enthusiasts. The City of Pekin entered the public transportation field in July of 1914 with the passage of Ordinance Number 38. The Purchase, Rehabilitation, and Construction of a Municipal Street Railway. Voters passed a referendum which allowed the city to issue \$48,000 in street railway bonds. A total of 164 bonds were issued at four and one-half per cent interest, 85 bonds for \$100 each and 79 bonds for \$500 each.

The city purchased the bankrupt line, including all track and equipment, for \$8,500. The balance of the money was used to expand services and purchase new equipment. Very specific and demanding requirements were set forth in the law, for example: cars were required to be constructed of red cypress or ce-

dar, 32 feet long, 10 feet wide, and capable of carrying a load range of 15,000 to 20,000 pounds and to be four feet high and one-half inch thick. The new Court Street line, with Street level tracks in two sections totaling 22 feet in length, with the tops 22 feet above the roadway, the trolley wire had to be grooved, hard-drawn copper, with a minimum tensile strength of 51,000 pounds per square inch.

Besides the route previously described, the street railway expanded from the corner of Court and Capitol Streets as far east on Court as the GM&O Railroad tracks just west of the present hospital. The usual schedule involved two cars, one leaving the east end of the line on Court Street, while the other would leave the west end of the line on South Second and Industry. The two cars would meet at the business district close to the Court House. There was a double track at this point, and one car would sidetrack until the other car passed, then proceed to its destination at the other end of the line. This operation ran seven days a week from early morning until late evening.

Many Pekinites remember the trolley cars and the friendships which developed while riding to and from work or uptown to shop—all for a nickel fare. The street railway continued until 1935, when it was replaced by our present bus service, which today com-



The power line for the trolley system, put in place in 1914, ran from the corner of Court and Capitol Streets, north along Court Street, and proceeded north on Capitol Street.



*Slightly more advanced than the automobiles that signaled the demise of trolley travel, the \$8,000 Cadillac on the left and the not quite \$3,000 Volkswagen (Bug) on the right might be said to epitomize the long and short of the most popular means of transportation today.*

sists of three air-conditioned Mercedes Benz diesel vehicles and two larger Blue Bird buses. The fare of 30¢ is reduced to 15¢ for senior citizens and includes any transfers.

The street cars went out fighting, though, with much City Council debate. C. F. Gehrig, one-time City Commissioner, appeared before the Council and urged that Court Street not be paved down the center so that the tracks could remain undisturbed because "we might want the street cars back." Many did, but the coming of the automobile was making travel too hazardous, with many auto/street car collisions. No more "clang, clang, clang"—just some fond memories for many residents and a slice of nostalgia for the younger set.

It should be noted, before leaving the topic of streets and roads, that travel via that means is available to Pekinites now in two methods other than the city bus lines. Inter-city travel is afforded by two cab companies, there are also two "through" buses operating—The Crown Transit Company, running between St. Louis and Peoria via Springfield and the Jacksonville Bus Line, operating between the same two points via Jacksonville. Both stop at the Downtown Motel, recently designated the "depot" after the closing of the old B and F on the corner of South Capitol and Elizabeth, which served for many years. (It is now the site of the Armed Forces Recruiting Offices.)

We turn our attention now to railroads. The impact of the old "iron horse" both as a means of personal travel and, especially, freight hauling, is deeply felt in

the growth of Pekin, and it is hoped that this section will serve to demonstrate just how great that impact has been.

However, it should also be noted here that any attempt at complete documentation of railroad history as it related to our city would be a tragic mistake for at least two reasons: (1) The complexity of the various failures, mergers, futile starting attempts, etc., would take literally years to research; (2) The research, once completed, would make incredibly boring reading for most people. With that disclaimer of full documentation out of the way, consideration of railroad history in Pekin, in general terms, can begin.

The beginning is not a glorious one. At least three railroads attempted construction in Pekin, but nought was to come of it. The Pekin and Tremont Railroad was incorporated January 13, 1855, with a capital of \$50,000. Supposedly, some toll houses were erected along the graded road bed, but no train ever was run along the incomplete track, as the company was forced under by the panic of 1857. (We'll use this railroad as an example of the discrepancies that crop up. One source indicates that this line was later extended and known as the Pekin, Bloomington and Wabash Railroad, which in turn became the Danville, Urbana, Bloomington and Pekin Railroad, with the charter being adopted in Pekin on March 27, 1867; a second source indicates that nothing was done with the original line until 1889, when it was consolidated with the Indianapolis, Bloomington and Western Railroad; and a third source reports that nothing was ever done with it. We could go on to other reports, but by now the point concerning the uncertainties of some of these early railroads has been made.) Two other lines talked construction through Pekin: the Alton, Jacksonville and Galena in 1836, and the Illinois Transportation Company in 1847. Neither ever drove a spike here.

Enough gloom; to the more positive side. In February of 1855 the Illinois River Rail Road Company was chartered. (Rail and Road were separated because the company also built plank roads for horse and wagon travel.) By September of 1856 the line was organized, and a month later it got a bit of a financial boost when the city of Pekin voted 301 to 5 to subscribe \$100,000 to the capital stock of the company. On the 4th of July, 1859, the first rail was laid in Pekin, and a grand celebration was held in honor of the auspicious occasion.

According to an 1861 City Directory, the line was completed as far as Virginia, a distance of 62 miles from Pekin, and rail fare there was \$2.25, passing through Hainesville, Mamito, Forest City, Topeka,

Havana, Bath, Sandora, and Chandlerville enroute. For 50¢ more, one could take a stage the additional 15 miles to Jacksonville, connecting there with the Great Western Railroad.

On June 11, 1865, the Illinois Railroad Company (also called the Illinois Valley) was taken over by the Pekin, Peoria and Jacksonville Railroad, thus taking the line into Jacksonville. Two years later, the PP&J merged with the Peoria and Springfield, extending service to those points. About 1892, control of the line was placed in the hands of the Chicago, Peoria and St. Louis. In general terms, the CP&STL controlled the railroad (although the Wabash was in and out of the picture occasionally) until 1926, when the present-day Chicago and Illinois Midland purchased the line. The C&IM runs from Peoria to Springfield via Havana, using the same right-of-way as the original Illinois River Railroad Company. (The track from Havana to Jacksonville was purchased by a group of enterprising farmers from the Chandlerville area who had great plans but soon found that running a railroad was not exactly within their realm of abilities, and the track was abandoned and has since been removed.)

When the C&IM took over the property of the



*This switch engine for the Peoria and Pekin Union Railroad is a part of the main rail connection between Pekin and other parts of the country for local industry.*

CP&STL, it gained possession of the old depot on Broadway and Third Streets which had been built by the PP&J. The structure, erected in 1873, is still standing, making it one of the older buildings in the city. Although many internal improvements were made over the years, the brick on the outside is the original, and plans are now being made to restore the old edifice and use it as a kind of museum and meeting place, thanks to the donation of the building to the city from the C&IM.

Two other railroads of local importance need to be briefly discussed before getting into the more general areas of railroads and the services they provide for a growing Pekin. The first is the Peoria and Pekin Union Railway, which was organized in 1880, and whose original track was formed directly from parts of two other lines, the PP&J and the Peoria and Springfield. The railroad has served basically as a switching line for other main-line roads operating between Peoria and Pekin. Two years after its founding, the P&PU operated a total of 51 miles of track, over 60% of which was yards and sidings. Today, the company's mileage has more than tripled, with side, yard, and industrial track accounting for an even greater percentage of its holdings. Still, the P&PU is one of the smaller railroads in the country in terms of total equipment and trackage; however, it is one of the most successful financially.

It occupies a unique position among terminal railroad properties. Coordinating, as it does, the activities of various trunkline entering the cities of Pekin and Peoria, it eliminates a vast amount of switching services at industries which would otherwise have to be performed by the individual railroads. The P&PU's



*Perhaps the explanation for the fact that this old C&IM building, soon to become city property, has stood for over 100 years is that it was constructed with triple thick brick wall.*

in fact, owned by several of the major lines who use its services, and handles between 3,000 and 4,000 cars daily, making it the largest railway center between Chicago and St. Louis.

The second railroad of local importance is the Peoria and Pekin Terminal Company, today known as the Peoria Terminal Company or the PT. Organized in the late 1890's, this road (originally called the Peoria and Pekin Traction Company) was also unique among railways in that it combined under one management a street railway, an inter-urban electric railway, and a steam railroad, all using the same tracks. It now provides only freight service, using diesel power. It might be noted that the PT provides switching service in Pekin for both CPC International and Quaker Oats Company. The railroad is actually controlled by the Chicago, Rock Island and Pacific.

The PT Company also provided Pekin with one of its more notable landmarks, namely the railway bridge across the Illinois River, just north of the present drawbridge. Construction on that project was started in 1898, and the bridge was opened for traffic on March 5, 1900. It consists of four fixed spans of 156 feet each and a draw span of 380 feet, which swings to the side. Six piers and one abutment rest on 50-foot piles below the river bed. The draw span is operated by two 15-horsepower motors which are connected to the railway circuit.

Records indicate that a large crowd gathered that March day in 1900 for the official opening of the new "superstructure." Adelaide Jansen of Pekin and Edith Pender of Peoria broke bottles of champagne on the draw of the bridge, which had cost \$200,000 to construct. In recent months, the bridge has been hit on several occasions by river craft and barges and is now inoperable. It is unlikely that it will ever be used again.

In addition to the two switching lines (P&PU and PT), there are four major trunk lines entering the city: The Atchison, Topeka and Santa Fe; the C&M; the Illinois Central Gulf (formed by a recent merger of the Illinois Central and the Gulf, Mobile and Ohio); and the Penn Central (formed by a merger of the New York Central and Pennsylvania railroads). Also, the Chicago and Northwestern, although it does not pass through Pekin proper, goes around the town and South Pekin houses its headquarters. Likewise, the Rock Island, through its control of the PT, plays an important role in the city's rail service.

One by gone aspect of railroads in Pekin is the old passenger service. Both the aforementioned P&PU and the PT operated such a service between here and Peoria, but the coming of the automobile made the

service less and less needed, and it was discontinued in the late 1920's.

Perhaps the most famous passenger train running through Pekin was the "Red Express," operated jointly by the AT&SF and J.S.E. Lines. It left Chicago at 7:55 p.m., passed through Pekin at 1:33 a.m., and arrived in St. Louis at 7:45 a.m. Its counterpart left St. Louis at 8:10 p.m., passed through Pekin at 2:12 a.m., and arrived in Chicago at 7:55 a.m. This train was equipped with the "latest" pattern Pullman Palace Sleeping Cars as well as reclining-chair cars.

There was also a day train called the "Fast Mail," which left Chicago at 7:35 a.m., passed through Pekin at 1:45 p.m. and arrived in St. Louis at 8:00 p.m. Its counterpart left St. Louis at 7:45 a.m., passed through Pekin at 1:55 p.m. and arrived in Chicago at 8:00 p.m. The day train offered reclining-chair cars and a buffet luncheon served enroute. The AT&SF operated the train from Chicago to Eureka; the J.S.E. Line took over the operation of the train at Eureka, operating over the TP&W rails from there to Peoria, and then over their own rails to St. Louis, stopping at Havana and Jacksonville enroute. Both trains were advertised as the "Travelers Delight."

At the turn of the century, railroads provided not only most of the passenger transportation from city to city, but also moved virtually all of the mail, often both on the same trains. Both of these services have long since been replaced. People now travel mostly by private car, bus, or airplane. Mail is now transported almost exclusively in and out of Pekin on trucks.

Railroads have long been established as the leading mode of transporting freight; this is true yet today, but many changes and innovations have come and gone over the years, all affecting industrial/agricultural Pekin. For example, railways have stopped handling less-than-carload (L.C.L.) traffic, due to financial pressures it caused the companies. These smaller commodities are now moved by truck or air.

The railroads did try to compete with the truck lines on L.C.L. traffic for a time by providing "Store-Door" delivery. Freight brought into town via rail would be contracted for local trucks to pick up at the railway station and deliver it to the consignee; on out-bound freight the process was reversed. Some railroads even operated their own truck lines for a time. But none of these ventures was ever very successful, and most were abandoned in the 1950's. Today, railroads try to compete with truck and barge lines by offering special train-load rates on bulk commodities such as coal, grain, molasses, and fertilizer, and by using special equipment not available from other transportation forms.

One other noticeable change especially affecting Pekin should be noted before moving on to our last major area of consideration, the river. That change, conveniently, involves both the river and the railroads, thus serving as a transition to travel by water.

In the middle 1920's, most grain was barged from small elevators along the river to the larger elevators at Pekin. There it was unloaded and transferred to waiting railroad cars, which transported it to other towns and seaports, as well as to local industries. Today, the process has been reversed; most of the grain moves to the elevators via rail and truck, and is then

reshipped to the various ports on barges.

Although railroads have been experiencing some financial difficulties of late, their prospects could not be called gloomy, either in Pekin or nationwide. Railroads still haul about 70% of all goods and commodities in this country, and probably an even greater percentage than that locally. A slogan promoted in recent years is "railroads move the country"; a few railway strikes in the past, which basically halted the movement of goods throughout the nation, have given a great amount of validity to the boast.



The IRPC began in the 1870's in conjunction with a river packet operation; later it provided a railroad car service for the shipment of Pekin grains until the company went out of business about 1934.

Having alluded to rivers previously, let us move right into a consideration of the topic Pekin, whatever else it may be, is a river town. Being thus located has both advantages and disadvantages. There are two main areas of concern to residents of any river town: how to get up and down the navigable water, and how to get across it. We will discuss them in that order.

Except for some footpaths made by Indians and a few horse and wagon trails made by early settlers, river traffic was the earliest means of transportation to and through Pekin. The river has played a critical role in the development of Pekin from its original selection as a "town site" through its present reputation as an ideal location for industrial and agricultural enterprises.

Until 1877 traffic on the Illinois River past Pekin consisted mostly of a mill race, on which the first wind packet. Because the channel was generally quite

shallow and narrow, these boats could easily navigate the waterway, but larger craft would find the going almost impossible. During these early years the river would, at times, get so low that it had to be dredged, and this could be accomplished with a horse and dipper.

Several packet companies offered passenger service between Pekin and Peoria, from whence travelers could make connections with various railroads. The fares for these excursions varied, but seemed to average about 50¢. One such company was the Pekin, Peoria and St. Louis, which offered a daily line of transports.

Still, more than 50 years after Pekin's settling, the Illinois River as a medium of rapid and inexpensive transportation into one corner of the Mississippi Valley has been almost completely forgotten in terms of importance.

Photo: Leland St. Germain, Illinois Historical Commission



*The Copperas Creek Dam, constructed in 1877, was the first major improvement on the Illinois River in this area.*

struction of the Copperas Creek lock and dam, which opened the river for larger boats with larger freight loads. About that time, records indicate that approximately 1.1 million tons of freight per year passed through the Illinois and Michigan Canal; most of this freight ultimately moved past Pekin.

River traffic increased until the turn of the century, when competition from railroads began to make its presence felt. The decline continued for three decades, with annual freight tonnage down to less than 75,000 tons at some points.

The turning point came in 1936 with the establishment of the Deep Waterway System. The Peoria Lock and Dam was constructed just north of Pekin (it's actually closer to Peoria), and other locks and dams were built along the river to control the water level for larger freight boats.

Freight zoomed to three million tons per year almost immediately; last year, freight traffic past Pekin was up to 40 million tons. The commodities most frequently shipped are bituminous coal, petroleum products, grain, sand and gravel, and scrap iron and steel. Today, huge double- and triple-width barges with as many as 25-50 cars are common sights at the foot of

Court Street, and many moorists will attest to having been held up as long as 10 minutes while the old drawbridge was raised and lowered to allow one or more of these giants of the river to pass.

That brings us to our second area of concern regarding the Illinois River at Pekin—getting across it. For more than 60 years, Peonites could cross the water only by ferry. The accounts of these early ventures are many and varied, and about all that can be said for certain is that many different people, as well as the city government, had a hand at running the service. Sometimes there was a toll charged, as when Elijah J. Mark was awarded the license on July 10, 1843. Rates then were established as follows: wagon and four horses, 37½¢; wagon and two horses, 12½¢; horse and buggy, 25¢; man and horse, 6½¢; led horses and loose cattle, 5¢ per head; and sheep and goats, 2¢ per head.

There were constant squabbles and court battles over the ferry service, with the city running it as a free service at times, and then changing their minds and leasing it to private individuals at other times. Frankly, it seemed to depend on who was holding what elected office in any given year.

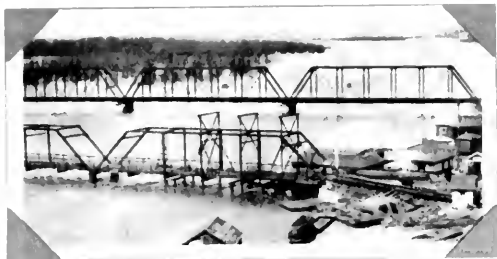
This chaos continued until 1885, when the City Council passed over a lower bid of \$14,500 for a pontoon bridge in favor of a \$17,500 bid for a plank bridge. And so the wooden structure, with much pomp and circumstance, was officially opened that year, with Mayor John Smith riding in the "first" rig to cross the new bridge. His grand opening was somewhat marred by the fact that most of the town's residents knew, and the rest soon learned, that Charlie Holland had actually been the first to cross the span, thanks to a conspiracy of workmen who laid the last plank at the crack of dawn for Holland to go across, removed it, and then re-laid it for the mayor. At any rate, the bridge was operated as a toll bridge until 1889, when it was declared a free bridge.

This initial Pekin structure, one of the first to cross the Illinois River, lasted until 1904, when a second project, a steel bridge with wooden planks for a floor, was erected in its place. Reports are that the noise which was created by traffic over this span could be heard for blocks upon reaching the west side of the

bridge; travelers had to reduce their speed to five miles per hour because of the deep chuck hole in the road.

But speed was no problem for the first few years of the Bridge's existence; no mention of automobile going across can be found until 1911. However, a record number of wagons and buggies crossed one month in 1911, when 11,125 buggies and 22,842 wagons rattled across the structure.

Traffic, now automobile, became increasingly heavy, and in the year 1925 State Representative Martin Talmann from Pekin successfully guided House Bill 251 through both chambers of the State Legislature, setting a precedent inasmuch as this was the first time that money from the General Fund was ever allocated for use in bridge construction. The \$400,000 granted, however, was not sufficient to meet the low bid of \$525,000 for a low bridge. The bid for



From 1885-1904 the wooden bridge in the foreground was Pekin's link to the other side of the river.



The rare photo captures the brief existence of 1885 when the city spanned three bridges. The old wooden bridge in the left was soon replaced, and only the new bridge, the center, and the railroad bridge on the right remain today.



The first railroad bridge was built to carry the Illinois Central line, passing over the river and under the bridge.



The old railroad bridge doesn't look like it could hold much like the new one. That's why it was replaced by the new bridge, the center, and the railroad bridge on the right remain today.

1950, but it was not until 1951 that the city's first bridge across the Mississippi River was completed. At a cost of \$52,000, the bridge was built to carry 50,000 cars a day, with a total of 100,000 cars a day, providing the necessary total.

The American Bridge Company of Indiana began construction shortly thereafter, and the official opening ceremony was held in 1950. This time it was Lohmann who was to ride in the first car, and he, having studied his history well, took no chances; he invited Charles Holland, by then quite well on in years, to ride with him. This time the ceremony went off without a hitch, and the bridge has served the city for nearly 35 years.

It too, though, has outlived its usefulness, and will be abandoned after construction of a new multi-million dollar four-lane superstructure scheduled for completion within the next few years. Although there may be much nostalgia attached to the present span, no one is fighting to save it—especially anyone who has been in traffic backed up to Orchard Mines wait-

ing for the center span to lower after a barge has passed.

One final note concerning transportation of 1974 is needed. Pekin is served by a small airport south of town, which caters mostly to private planes. Commercial flights are usually scheduled out of Peoria with connections at either Chicago or St. Louis, although a direct flight is available to New York City daily.

Safety has become the prime concern of 1974 Pekinites, with environmental concerns a close second. Over 50,000 lives are lost each year in highway accidents (six were killed in Pekin last year); and exhaust emissions from trucks and cars, along with noise pollution, have many citizens here and all over the country concerned about the quality of our lifestyle. Nevertheless, transportation has taken giant steps forward, and Pekin has moved with it.



PEKIN, ILL. (Aerial view of airport.)



## 4 *Business*

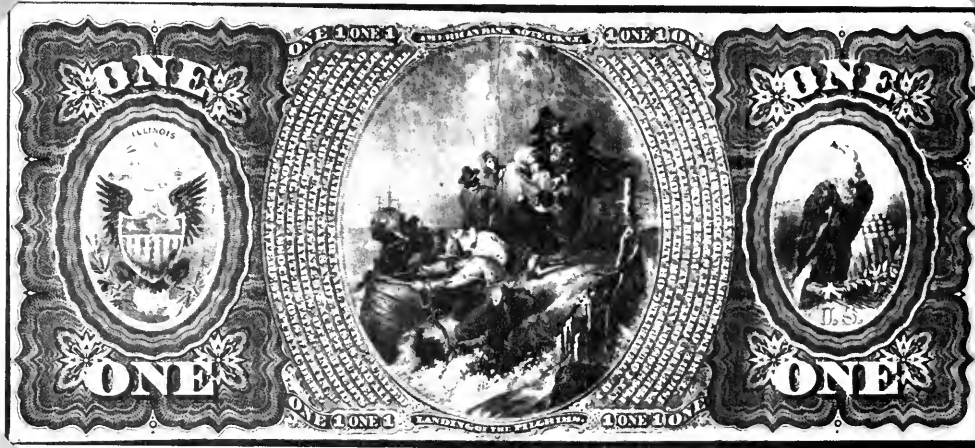
The soundness of its banks is an important factor in the successful growth of any commercial center, and so it seems appropriate to begin the business section with a discussion of those businesses from which other businesses draw support—the city's banks.

Tazewell County's first such institution was the Shawneetown Bank, which opened in Pekin in 1839. A branch of the Bank of Illinois, the establishment was located on the corner of Court and Second Streets, reportedly in the rear of David Mark's store. Colonel C. Oakley was its president, Charles C. Wilcox, cashier, and William C. Docker, clerk. The institution had but a short run, for the collapse of the Illinois Internal Improvement System so affected its operations that in June of 1842 it closed its doors.

For a decade the businessmen of Pekin were without a bank, until G. H. Rupert and James Hames organized the Platte Valley Bank in 1852. (Reportedly Hames had established a banking office one year earlier, but it was simply a branch of a Peoria bank.) This institution was in operation during a period of time in which banks issued their own currency. Small local banks would sign their names to currency from larger institutions, and the Pekin bank chose to issue currency from Platte Valley Bank in Nebraska. This is significant because much of the money circulated at that time was of questionable value (it was only as sound as the bank which issued it, and Confederate currency was especially shaky), but the Platte Valley currency maintained its worth. Thus the bank operated for about nine years, but when it finally did close, many depositors lost heavily in the future

After this bank's collapse, a number of other banking operations followed it in rapid succession: the Leonard Brothers from 1860-'62, Greigg and Smith from about 1862-'64; and William Docker and Company from 1864-'66. In 1866 Docker sold to the organizers of the First National Bank (not, however, the present-day operation with the same name) and its doors opened on March 15 of the same year with \$100,000 capital. The bank's first officers were L. F. Leonard, president; F. W. Leonard, vice-president, and B. F. Blossom, cashier. First National was the first bank in Tazewell County organized under the National Banking System, which was founded during the Civil War in attempt to stabilize national finances. First National operated as a bank of issue for about 10 years before it called in its bills, and surrendered its charter as a national bank. After its liquidation in 1875, the private firm of Leonard and Blossom took over and operated a private banking business for a number of years.

At about the same time that the first National Bank was organized, the Feis Smith banking firm was founded. The bank was located in the same block as the Smith wagon works, but it was conducted as a distinct and separate business. An interesting note in conjunction with the story of this operation is that upon the death in 1890 of Fred Smith, the senior partner who had taken over after his brother, Feis died in 1870, Habbe Velde of the F. & H. Smith Company, Henry Block and John Schipper of the Schipper and Block dry goods establishment, and F. E. Unland of the Smith Huppen gram company (all of





Federal Charter to become the First Federal Savings and Loan Association of Pekin in November, 1960.

First Federal was the city's first savings and loan to offer a drive-up teller window, and it was the first financial institution in Central Illinois to install an electronic message center; the 17-foot wide moving message of 21-inch high, lighted letters is mounted on a 25-foot support and flashes information day and night.

The association has enjoyed steady growth since the turn of the century at which time assets were \$60,352. Present assets are over \$32 million, and Fred R. Soldwedel is the current president.

After the advent of the savings and loan associations, another bank opened as a private business under the name of George Herget and Sons on April 17, 1905. The operation was located at 363 Court Street, and the initial officers were George Herget, president; W. P. and H. G. Herget, vice-presidents; C. H. Turner, cashier, and W. A. Stockert, assistant cashier.

Throughout the years, the Herget Bank grew until deposits on June 30, 1943, amounted to \$5,301,462. Exactly six years later they had soared to over \$11 million. As the bank's assets grew, so did demands of its physical plant; thus in August of 1958, the business moved into a modern, newly constructed building at the corner of Fourth and St. Mary Streets, on which site the bank is still located. This structure boasted 22,000 square feet of floor space on three different levels, and drive-up and walk-up teller service was provided in addition to free customer parking. Since 1958 a number of remodeling and acquisition programs have taken place, including a TV drive-up facility, acquisition of the original Pekin Insurance building and its subsequent conversion to a Herget Service Center (including a travel service, installment loan, and data processing departments) and, most recently, the completion of a mini-park on Fourth Street. All of this combines to make the Herget National Bank the largest financial complex in Tazewell County, involving over 97 officers and employees under President M. V. Burling, and claiming assets of nearly \$64.5 million.

With the backing of these five institutions, Pekin has grown into a community financially promising enough to have obtained two additional banks in recent years. The community-owned Pekin National Bank opened for business on May 5, 1965, with Milo A. Miller as president and Gerald E. Conaghan, managing officer and cashier. (Today Miller has moved up to become chairman of the board and Conaghan is president. Initially, the new addition to Pekin's business community leased the old Farmer's National

Bank building at 333 Court, but since the construction of a new facility in 1972, the bank has been located at 329 Court. During 1974, Pekin National will complete its building program by occupying a modern drive-in facility at Capitol and Margaret Streets. On December 31, 1965, the bank's assets totaled \$2,154,000. In 1974 the assets will approach \$14 million, a success which is due in part to the patronage of the bank by its 365 individual stockholders.

The community's newest bank is a fledgling operation in comparison with the other institutions discussed in this chapter, but since its first day of business on March 1, 1971, First State Bank has attained significant stature in the banking community. Organized as a result of the business and residential growth on Pekin's east side, the bank is located at 2818 Court. Already the operation is well over 2,000 accounts strong with assets totaling \$4 million; furthermore, President William E. Troutman recently announced plans for the construction of a new structure, adjacent to the Pekin Mall, scheduled for completion in late 1975.



*The First National Bank will soon be moving from this building on Court Street to a new one now under construction on Margaret*

These, then, are the financial institutions that made it possible for a large number of Pekinites to own their own homes, as well as provide the financial solidarity necessary to build a strong business community. As a unit, these organizations are the oldest of the city's businesses, but before entering into a discussion of Pekin's present-day enterprises, it is appro-



private banks, and most of them of the building-firm of the past.

A 1960 edition of the *Pekin Post-Tribune* says, "The volume of business done in Pekin is big enough for a city three times its population. It would be hard to find another place in the country where there are so many wealthy business concerns." The longevity of some of Pekin's early businesses would lend some eloquent of faith to this statement, for many of the stores mentioned in this particular edition of the *Post* served the Pekin community for well over 50 years.

some of them having gone out of business only in recent years.

One of the older and longer-lasting of Pekin businesses was the Conklin Lumber Company, which stood on the corner of Second and Ann Fliza Streets for well over 100 years. It was a family business, and its operators played an important role in Pekin's development. Major Ketchum S. Conklin founded the firm in 1858, when he came to Pekin from what was then Greenpoint, Long Island (Brooklyn, New York today); he married Martha Doolittle, for whose grand-



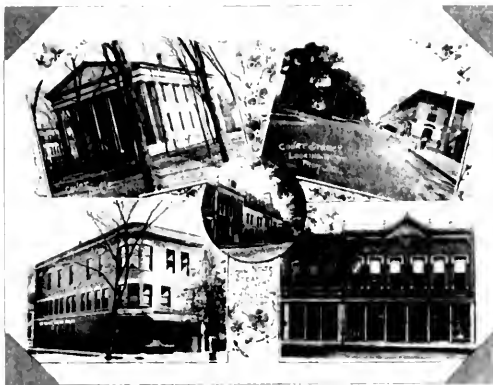
father Fort Doolittle was named. His son F. T. Conklin joined him in business in 1893, and he also left his mark on the city. F. T. was a charter member of the Tazewell Club, Rotary Club, and Country Club, and he served as president of the Citizens Improvement Association, the forerunner of today's Chamber of Commerce.

The business itself, as well as the men who ran it, contributed to Pekin's history. Conklin Lumber Company was responsible for the construction of the old City Hall, the Tazewell Club, and the Park Pavilion and Palm House, all famous Pekin landmarks, whose pictures appear in other sections of this publication. Conklin's also constructed Franklin School and the old high school that stood on the present site of Washington Junior High. The 18-room high school, which served Pekin students for over 40 years, was shaped like a St. Andrew's cross (X) and had been designed by F. T.'s uncle, John D. Handbury.

A stroll down Court Street 50 years ago would take one past many businesses opened before the turn of the century, but with names still familiar to modern Pekinites, even though the businesses themselves may no longer be in operation. Henry Birkenbusch, an expert in diamonds and watches, ran one of the leading jewelry stores in Central Illinois for many years. C. H. Hohimer was not only the leading retailer in bicycles and electrical supplies, but he was also an expert electrician whose skills were much in demand throughout the city. The most lasting fame of all these early firms will undoubtedly go to H. H. Cole, the veteran photographer who operated a studio on Court Street throughout the early 1900's. Considered one of the most proficient photographers in this section of Illinois, Mr. Cole was particularly skilled in landscape work, and as a result of his expertise, his Cole Souvenir booklets have become collector's items, containing an invaluable assortment of memorabilia of the Pekin of days past.

A number of grocers were also well-known to several generations of Pekinites. Early grocers secured patronage by placing a keg of beer at the disposal of their customers (the saloons offered free lunch), but in later years they relied upon their "specialties" to attract business. A round the turn of the century, F. A. Harnish operated a store at 357 Court, the present site of the Union Store, where "good goods" were his specialty. F. J. Albertsen specialized in fruit, tea, and coffee at 401 Morgan (now a city parking lot). C. J. Tunks at 701 Court called himself the "candy confectioner" and the "biggest fruit store in the city."

At 603 1/2 Court was a store where customers could find everything from a barrel of apples to a barrel of



*This page from an 1899 Cole Souvenir booklet captures the Pekin of long, long ago. The Zerwekh Building in the lower left hand corner is the Times Building today. The 324 Court House is in the upper left hand corner, and the other pictures are well labeled. Note the advertising below the center middle photo.*

George A. Kuhl. He was not only a grocer who supplied Pekinites with both staples and fancy grocery goods from his store at 324 Court, but also a florist whose greenhouses frequently supplied customers as far away as St. Louis and Chicago, and attracted tourists from miles around. In Prairie Lawn Groceries houses covered 55,000 square feet under glass.

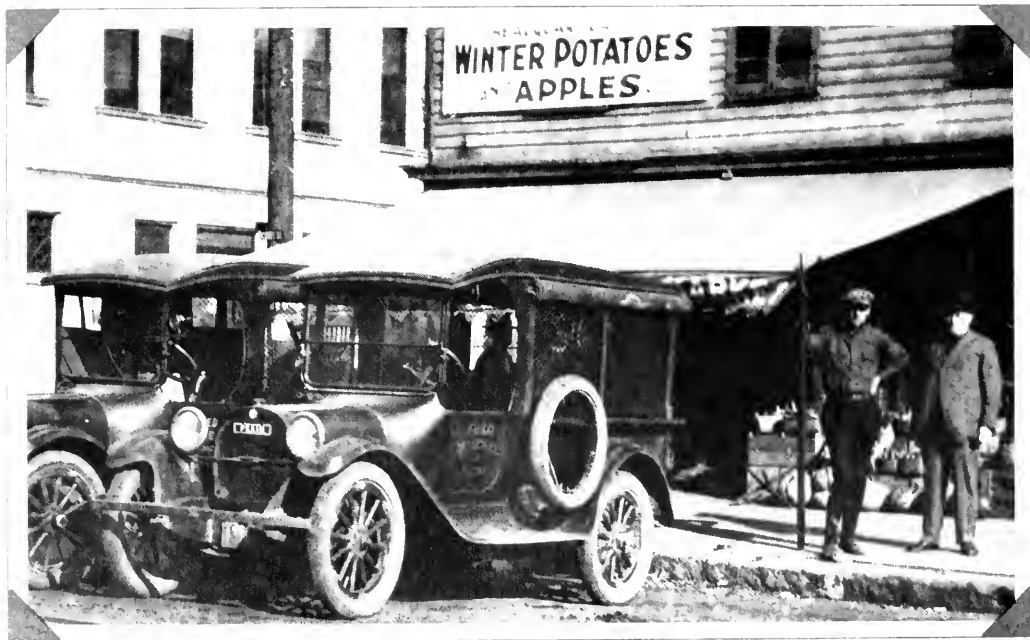
Both Robert Hill and Albert Zerwekh were popular caterers. Zerwekh's three-story pressed-brick building housed a bakery and confectionery on the ground floor and basement, and the Masonic Hall occupied the second and third floors. The building was considered a major contribution to the beautification of the city, and today has come to be known as the Times Building, for it houses the operations of the city newspaper. Zerwekh's was famous for its ice cream, delicate ices, and soft drinks. Hill specialized in the old whiskeys and leading brands of cigars. The large mahogany interior of his place of business at 324 Court made it recognized as a club and meeting place in the city.

The Handbury firm of Vello, Reckley & George was long one of the city's leading hardware and paint store, and the only one in Pekin. Backed by a large stock, the firm had a fine ordering system. At 325-27 Court Street, the firm supplied everything a home or a business needed from a barrel of apples to a barrel of

apples. The firm was also known for its fine

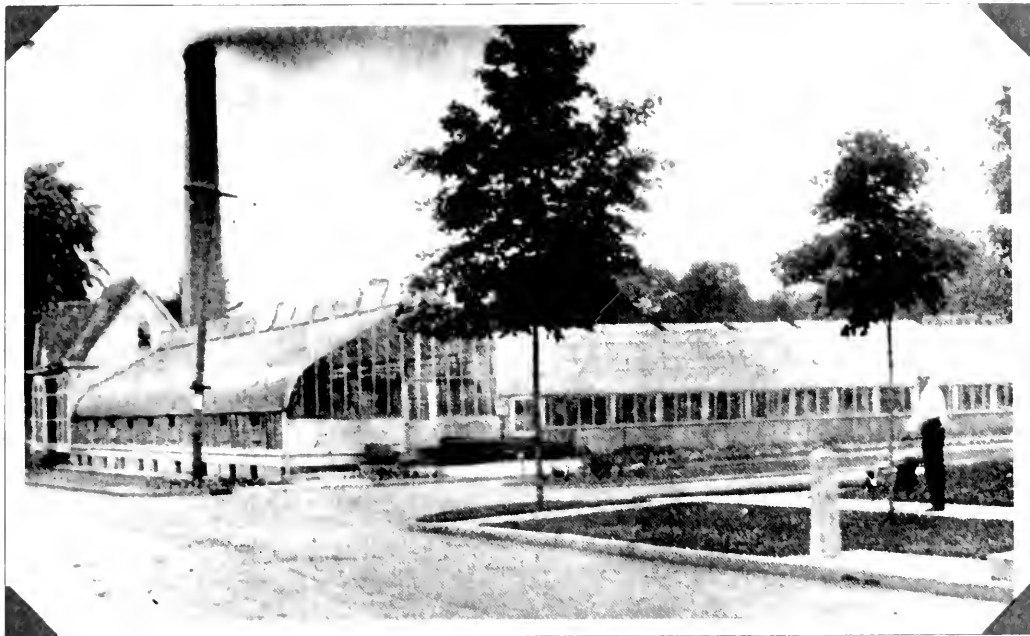


*Having given up the keg of beer in front of the store as a drawing card, Albertsen (left) and Riese relied upon their enticing sidewalk displays and solid reputations to lure customers inside*



*The pride and joy of the Moeckel fruit and vegetable operation, located on the site presently occupied by Thrifty's, were their delivery trucks, the first in Pekin to have air in the tires.*





*The Kuhl greenhouses on North Eighth Street were well known throughout the state.*

Store. Established in 1867, this "ethical prescription service" as the Ehrlichers described it, operated from the same room for over 85 years of continuous service to the community.

There was also a large number of dry goods merchants. D. H. Abrahams ran a complete merchant tailoring establishment (supplying materials as well as tailoring clothes), as did C. I. Brereton and Charles Riefenstahl. P. H. Welty owned the largest millinery establishment in this section of the state, drawing trade from all parts of the county and Peoria as well. But the most long-lived of these operations was undeniably the Schipper & Block Company which first started supplying dry goods and clothing to Pekinites at about the same time that Lincoln was re-elected to the Presidency in 1864. Their first store was located on Margaret Street on land later occupied by the Velde-Roelofs Company (an area called "Smith Row" because so many of the Smith enterprises were located in that block). In 1875 operations were moved to 302 Court Street, one door west of the old post office. Later the store was moved to the corner of Capitol

and Court, the present site of the downtown Allen's Vogue. The business was completely wiped out by fire in 1898 and again in February of 1922, but the owners (Art Ehrlicher for many years) rebuilt each time. It was not until the early '60's that new owners closed its doors for good. Many Pekinites will remember the exposed elevator and the cylindrical money carriers which were connected by "pipeline" to a centrally located cashier.

A brief history of "The Princess"—the student hang-out from 1919 to 1950 might best serve to recreate the spirit of the downtown section in which these early stores were located. The Princess was a candy kitchen at 402 Court Street founded and operated by the Beres brothers: Chris, Pete, and Harry (known as "John" to his student customers). They had migrated to Pekin from Koinas, Greece.

It used to be standing-room-only in the Princess on nights of high school football and basketball games. When the 18 booths and fountain area were filled, the door would be locked. Latecomers stood in line outside, entering only as others left. The old, three-



VELDT, ROLLOFF & CO. HARDWARE, 100 N. 1st St., Minneapolis, Minn.



WILLIAMS & SON, 100 N. 1st St., Minneapolis, Minn.

digit phone number of the Princess, 183, was the most-used in town as parents, awaiting overdue children, would call to summon them home.

Holidays at the Princess were a Pekin tradition. At Christmas the specialty was candy canes and ribbons, while the Easter feature was chocolate eggs (including a massive 30-pounder). Local schools would bring classes down to observe the candy-making process. (Pete was the resident expert.)

Other specialties popular with generations of Pekinites were the caramel apples and the "pop-eye" ice cream cups. Pete brought the taffy apple recipe back from a trip to Washington, D.C. in 1920. The Princess introduced it to Pekin (perhaps to the state of Illinois), and it soon became as much of an autumn tradition as football. "Pop-eyes," introduced in the 1930's, were half-pint ice cream cups sold for 5¢. They became so popular that the Princess entered in to a million-cups contract with a national cup manufacturer.

In 1927 the Princess added to its assortment of novelties a milk box. But that symbol of progress, come with an era of mass production, and the 1920's suburban boom, which marked the end of the Depression, and many of her other exports. The old marble tomb-

tan and 1880's faces disappeared, along with their mother of the personal town, that helped define the character of the old home town.

The Rolling Mills goods store alone remained to present-day Pekin a relic from its childhood. The shop, founded in 1868, although it had been closed until 1899 by Nicholas Rolling, still stood on the same spot it occupied in the post-Civil War era, and the present owners at 183 seemed from the 19th-century family line. The original store was only one room, with a hatching porch to the north. The goods were stacked in boxes on the sidewalk or hung above the door. A well is inside. Since those early days, however, the store has been extensively remodeled, expanded, and added to. It is a good example of the town's evolution.

Although it is perhaps too good to be true, some of the town's long, narrow streets, like Elm, are said to have been laid out by the original owners of the Rolling Mills. The streets were laid out in a grid pattern, and the streets were named after the Rolling Mills. The streets were laid out in a grid pattern, and the streets were named after the Rolling Mills. The streets were laid out in a grid pattern, and the streets were named after the Rolling Mills.

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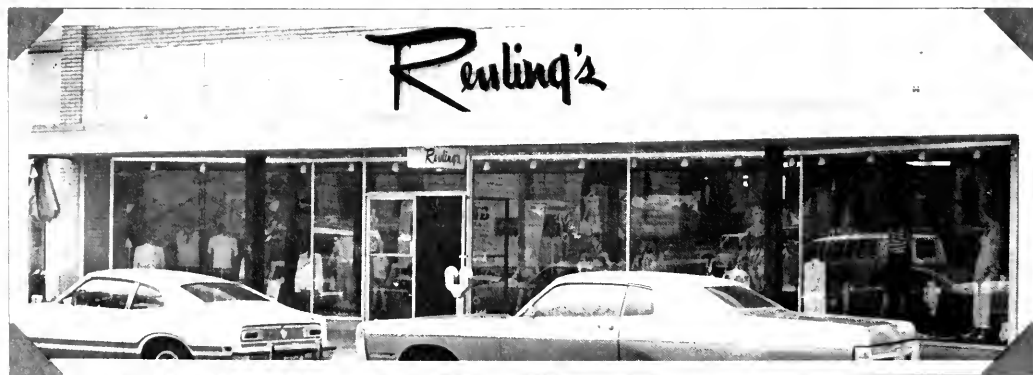
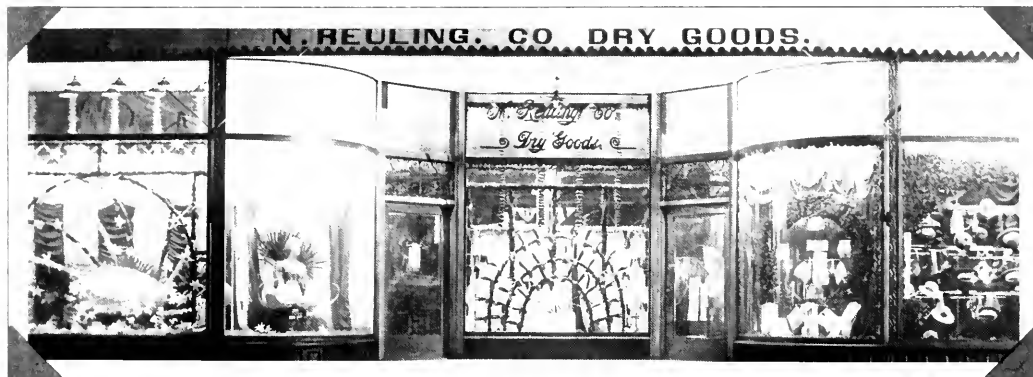


The Princess windows contained novelties and the sign above the entrance read "402".

and diverse types of businesses, but also a number of different business districts. Substantial numbers of retailers are located not only downtown, but also on Derby Street (where the first store, Moeckel's grocery, was surrounded by cornfields), on North Eighth Street, Sheridan Road, Broadway, Parkway Drive, and on the east side, where new businesses are springing up most rapidly. In an attempt to give some idea of the variety of services available to Pekinites today, brief histories on some of the older businesses follow.

Aside from Reuling's, the Kuecks Funeral Home is the only other of the present-day businesses estab-

Many Pekinites will remember the annual quilt shows held in Reuling's, the quilts in the picture in the upper right-hand corner of this page were displayed from February 20 to March 3 of 1955. The interior of the store has changed substantially from those days. The exterior of the store has also undergone substantial renovation, as the bottom two pictures prove



lished before the turn of the century. The company began initially in 1880 as the Kuecks-Wubben Furniture and Undertaking business, located in the 200 block of Court Street. Charles Kuecks carried on the business after the death of Mr. Wubben, and was joined in 1906 by his son-in-law, Harry C. Willmont, who had married Henrietta Kuecks.

Mr. Willmont was a pioneer in modern funeral practices and customs in the United States, writing and lecturing nation-wide and in Canada on the concept of having funerals in funeral parlors rather than in the deceased's home. In 1918 the company moved to 328 Court Street and became Kuecks Company, Incorporated, known more widely as simply the "Funeral Home"; there many of the aforementioned ideas were put into practice.

Three years later, the firm moved to its present location at 31 South Capitol. Shortly thereafter, Mr. Willmont died at the age of 36. (Ironically, after all of his pioneering, Willmont was buried from his own home, upon the insistence of his widow.) Charles Kuecks carried on through 1927, when he was joined

in partnership by Clyde Cowser, who had married Mr. Willmont's widow.

Fred Soldwedel, Jr. became a partner in the business in 1934, eventually taking over complete ownership. In 1950 Robert Woolsey, the present owner, became a partner with Soldwedel, who was, by then, more active in insurance and banking. Woolsey teamed with Louis Meyer in 1954, but became sole owner in 1965. Bennett and Bard Woolsey joined their father in 1964, and in 1973 the name was changed to Kuecks-Woolsey, Incorporated.

Although never an "owner" in the legal sense of the word, one man associated with the Kuecks Company for nearly 60 years achieved great local esteem. Brian Naylor, who died in 1973, was with the firm from its earliest days, driving horse-drawn hearses and gaining quite a reputation locally as an ambulance driver without equal. Many is the time that Brian braved the elements of weather and time to aid a sick or injured person. He served through many of the disasters discussed elsewhere in this book, and Fred Soldwedel, Jr. revels in telling about the time Naylor



*Pekin's oldest funeral home has grown from a small part of a furniture business to an enterprise large enough to occupy this modern facility on South Capitol*

took a set of railroad tracks on Koch Street just a bit too fast, with the result that the team of Naylor and Soldwedel was called upon to deliver a healthy (fortunately) baby boy.

As it has turned out, the city's funeral homes provide more than just burial services to Pekinites. Our city is certainly not known for preserving old landmarks, but the funeral homes have adopted some of the community's most elegant estates as their headquarters. When the 412 Elizabeth Street home of the Noel Funeral Home (founded by Orville W. Noel and operating in conjunction with the Albertson and Koch Furniture Store from 1900-1926) was destroyed by fire, Noel purchased the old Rupert Estate at 420 Walnut Street. Subsequent owners W.J. Weimer (Mr. Noel's partner who assumed ownership upon Noel's death in 1947) and Merle L. Henderson (who took over after Weimer's death and introduced the present name, Noel-Henderson Funeral Home) have preserved "Rupert Park" for Pekin posterity. The Preston Funeral Home, established in 1934 by Clarence and Rowland Preston and owned by Nancy and Neale Hanley since 1965, operates from the remodeled Lee Smith mansion at 509 North Fourth. Finally, the Abts Mortuary, founded by John and Gladys Abts in 1924 and presently owned by their son John, has converted the former L. W. Wilson Estate at 905 South Fifth, one of Pekin's most impressive private homes in its day and a worthwhile reminder of the community's past.

For 65 years of continuous operation, the firm of Charles Splitzgerber & Son has served the residents of Pekin. In 1906 Charles D. Splitzgerber and his son, Charles J., opened a sheet metal shop and heating business in a small building in the rear of 420 Ann Eliza. They had to hire local draymen to haul heavy equipment, but for daily jobs they hauled their tools in a wheelbarrow. At the turn of the century there was a great demand for the products of the sheet-metal business, for central, warm-air heating was just coming into its own. Ornamental cornices and tinny steel ceilings were very popular; tin roofs and gutters were installed on many Pekin homes, and the firm also made household items such as buckets, copper boilers, dippers, tea kettles, etc., right in the shop. In 1914 the business moved to its present location at 419 Margaret where the third generation of Splitzgerbers is represented in the person of Charles Jr.'s son George, who assumed ownership in 1953. Today he specializes in heating, air conditioning, and residential and commercial sheet metal work. (As for fourth generation representation, George's son-in-law Fred Andre, is also engaged in the business.)

Kriegsman Moving International is another of Pekin's success stories. Founded in September 1913 by P.J. Kriegsman, the business started out with 32 horses and about 20 wagons and operated out of a large red barn at the corner of Henrietta and North Capitol Streets. Allegedly the horses delighted in getting out at night and eating up the neighbors' lawns. Fortunately, for both the Kriegsman and Pekin, the neighbors did not react violently and run them out of town, and the business flourished.

Arthur Kriegsman, son of the founder and chairman of the board for over 55 years, recalls that in those early days, "Paved streets were virtually non-existent, and we hauled through deep sand to get to places like Corn Products. Twice a week our wagons hauled freight from the river boat 'Bald Eagle' on the Illinois River. The fish business prospered in those days and we hauled many loads from fish markets to the railroads for shipment elsewhere."

Furniture was stored in the 100 block of Court Street until 1921, when a two-story warehouse located at 109-111 North Third Street was constructed. In 1926 the stable was moved to an old brewery at 309-313 North Second, and the big red barn was torn down. The First World War saw the beginning of the use of trucks, and gradually the entire horse and wagon operation was replaced, with the result that the Second Street address was used as a garage.

The old Pekin Leather Products Company building at 1101 Margaret (where Kroger's, Super-X, and Cohen's are today) was used for warehousing merchandise for a time. Then in 1948 the first warehouse at the present Koch Street location was erected, during the 35th anniversary year of the firm. Since that time the entire Kriegsman operation in Pekin moved to that address, where the company has three million cubic feet of warehousing space under one roof and 30 acres of outside storage.

In 1939 Mayflower Transit Company granted Kriegsman's the exclusive franchise for the Pekin-Peoria area, and today KMI is one of the oldest of over 1,000 agents of the Mayflower Company. The Kriegsman operation is three-fold, the Moving Division, the Commercial Warehousing Division, and the International Division. Besides the Pekin office, KMI has branches in Peoria, Bloomington, and Hong Kong. John Kriegsman, currently serving as a State Representative, is president of the operation.

Pekin's present dry-cleaning establishments were represented as early as 1912, when the Little Star Cleaners was established at 415 Court Street by Chris Antonio. The following year he sold his share, but bought back into the operation in 1925, forming a

partnership with Tony Kellas. In 1931 the cleaners moved to its present address at 105 North Fifth. The Kellas-Antonio partnership was dissolved in 1964, and a new one was formed with Gus and Chris Antonio.

In the early days, dry cleaning was done in a bucket of benzine and naphtha, and pressing was done with irons heated by gas, fed from lines connected by a hose to a main gas line. Today the buckets have been replaced with modern machines, and all pressing is done on steam presses. Before World War II the establishment had initiated a delivery service—all deliveries were made by bicycle.

In 1948 the business expanded to include carpet and furniture cleaning, and Little Star Cleaners still cleans and blocks hats, an art almost lost in the modern, "hatless" times.

Initially, Pckin's grocery stores were small, privately owned businesses which catered to a single neighborhood more than the entire city. Over the years, these have gradually given way to the larger, chain operations which draw their clientele from a much wider area. But the neighborhood grocery store is still preserved in the business of G. Elmer Hoffert. He began his operation in 1925 by purchasing the stock of the Charles Blackburn grocery at the corner of Eighth and Catherine. In January of 1926 he bought the whole building and erected a new store on the same

site in 1930. It was at 150 cents a bushel that Hoffert began his dry cleaning and express business and his patrons were able to do laundry and fruit baskets and express mail.

Another family owned and operated grocery, V. Arnett's at 715 North Fifth, has far outgrown its birth status. Formerly the Weghorst Grocery, the store was purchased by Loren Arnett in 1934. Since that time Louis Loren, Jr., and Kenneth have joined their father, and the store has grown to become one of the city's busiest markets.

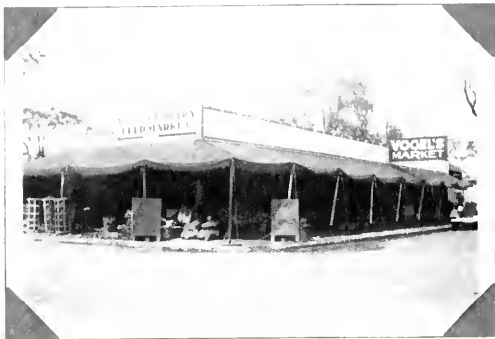
The largest locally owned grocery, though, traces its beginnings back to 1934 when a Caterpillar employee named Virgil W. Auer was faced with the decision to work for Virgil or for himself and to open a model fruit and vegetable store for a name. He took the name of the corner of South Second and Subera Street. At the time he had no other stock capital.

The site of this building was once a hind neck miniature golf course. The main artery of the store is the South Side Union Express, which opened its own grocery store in 1938, and to the north. A little to the north is a bank. The enterprise did not begin in a big way as the receipts for the first full day came to the grand total of \$3.25.

However, business picked up, and in the summer



Elmer Hoffert's grocery store at 105 North Fifth Street.



*The early Vogel's market on the corner of Second and Sabella was filled to overflowing, mostly with produce. Note the brick paved streets.*



*Today, the modern building shown here has plenty of space to accommodate the vast number of articles available to customers. The produce section is only a small part of this huge store.*

of 1935, a half-block long shed was constructed from old window sashes and used lumber. In 1936 the shed was enclosed, and additional space to the west of the store was constructed. Then on a Saturday in March of 1937, Virgil W. Vogel arrived at work to discover that his infant business had been destroyed by fire. There was no insurance, and so an auction was held to dispose of what had been saved. Yet, six days later, on the same site, Vogel's was re-opened. The shed had been rebuilt, there was new merchandise, a new meat department, and a sale!

In 1938 Vogel erected the city's first "supermarket" at South Second and Susannah Streets, one block south of the old location. It was Pekin's first self-service venture, and it was also the first time Vogel's had a real floor under it, for the old store had been served by cold earth and sawdust. The 50' x 100' structure opened June 17, 1939, but the new supermarket was so popular that it soon outgrew its existing space. In 1940 the first expansion was already underway, so that the building measured 100' x 100'. Frozen food lockers were installed and by 1941, Vogel's was the biggest supermarket in Central Illinois.

Not content even with this achievement, Vogel began experimenting with self-service meat cases. By November of 1942 he had decided to convert his entire meat department to a self-service operation, and it was the first of such in the entire United States. For this achievement he is recognized in both the United States and Canada as a pioneer in this field, and testimonials to his contribution have come from all over North America.

Additional remodeling and expansion has taken place in recent years, and Vogel's remains a modern,

self-service market today. Besides this store, other smaller stores were operated at one time, but they were discontinued when it became apparent that the buying needs of the public were best served with a giant-sized industry. Vogel's has also become famous for raising its own beef, and the ever-growing operation has expanded into Vogel's, Incorporated. The parent company, with headquarters in an old Herget mansion on Washington Street, contains Vogel's Market, Bird Farm Sausage (see Industry section), Vogel Farms and Black Angus Beef Cattle, and Vee-co Leasing, Incorporated, the latter company engaged in leasing equipment related to the food industry.

The Larkin Bakery is another small, local operation in a trade that is rapidly becoming monopolized by large chain businesses. Begun in May of 1926 when 21-year old Martin Larkin bought out the Rubart Brothers Bakery at 526 Court, Larkin's became the first area bakery to offer "fancy-decorated cakes" designed by Mrs. Lillian Larkin. In 1968 the bakery relocated at 1211 Court. Marty's brother Ervan and the other bakers still report there every night at 9 to work through the wee hours of the morning, producing the rolls, cakes, cookies, and pastries which have made Larkin Home Bakery famous for almost 50 years.

In 1927 Richard L. Smith and his wife, Faye, moved to Pekin from Canton on what Mr. Smith later referred to as "a shoestring and 160 pounds of intestinal fortitude." With that and a lot of talent and business sense they established the Smith Plumbing and Heating Company in their home at 521 Court. In 1929 the business was moved to the garage of the Smith's new home at 621 Margaret and, later, at their 901 Washington residence, the plumbing and heating



operation occupied the carriage house. Over the years the business has grown from a "one-truck" operation to eight. Smith owned and operated the business until his death in 1961, at which time two employees, Harry Stien and Cal Benson, took it over and today operate from 512 South Ninth Street under the original name.

1927 also saw the advent of another new Pekin business. At that time, I. B. Cohen, already a successful furniture store operator in Peoria, purchased the Koeh, Alberts furniture operation at 424 Court, and began what has become one of Pekin's most successful retail stores. It is interesting to note in these days of careful bookkeeping, that the store's first eight employees were paid in cash with no deductions for social security or income tax—innovations which have since arisen. In 1933, Cohen's bought out the Heckman and Spangler furniture store and moved their stock to the Court Street address. At that time the store made window shades and handled toys, but that has been discontinued today. In 1946 the store was remodeled and air conditioning was installed, but

in September of 1958, the fire discussed in the Catastrophies section completely destroyed the building. Cohen's re-opened the next day at the corner of 11th and Broadway, remodeling extensively in May of 1959. In September of 1969, the warehouse portion of the store was demolished, a building in which saddles and barrels had been made and Caterpillar and Kriegsmann's had both stored goods. The remaining building still contains wooden beams from the original structure, the center of which was destroyed by fire in 1933. Most of the burned beams were replaced with steel, but at the 12th Street end of the store, some of the old wooden ones still remain, a few of them slightly charred, but nonetheless sound.

In January of 1970, Cohen's moved into the present store, two doors down the block from their original 11th Street location, and Kroger and Super-X chains moved into the complex.

In 1936 Gene Sangalli became involved in the nursery business more or less as a hobby, using only a 10' x 20' plot. Four years later, he moved his operations to a half-acre of ground at 1001 South 13th



Street. Here Sangalli developed a method of container-growing nursery stock and Sangalli's became one of the very first nurseries in the United States to use this revolutionary approach. The garden shop that Sangalli and his wife Ivone started was the first store in the area catering exclusively to lawn and garden items. Shortly after opening the shop, the Sangalli's purchased 10 acres of ground on East Broadway Road and were soon growing much of their own nursery stock. In 1961 the entire operation was moved a little further down the Broadway Road, and in 1965 a greenhouse for tomato plants and marigolds was added.

Throughout the years, Sangalli's has landscaped some of the finest homes, business establishments, golf courses, and industrial sites in the area. The business has also donated hundreds of shade and ornamental trees to various organizations.

Joseph M. Steger was born in Switzerland and came to the United States in 1905 at the age of sixteen. After holding a number of different jobs and serving with the U.S. Army in France in World War I, Steger came to Pekin and found employment with Robert Lathicken in his Pekin furniture store. In 1937 Steger branched out on his own, with a total capital of \$1,000.

The original store was located at 420 Margaret in what is now part of a new addition to the Central Telephone Company Building, and at first, it sold only paints. In 1939 the operation moved across the street to 419 Margaret in the front of the Splittgerber Tin Shop. By 1946 linoleums, tile, and carpeting were added, and the store was enlarged to include the entire building.

In 1949 Louis Steger became his father's business partner and assumed sole responsibility for the enterprise when his father retired in 1958. In 1959 a new building on the corner of Court and Ninth Streets was completed. With the addition of a second-floor furniture department in 1964 (accessible via a glass-enclosed elevator) Steger's became a complete home furnishings center. One more addition constructed in 1972 was larger than the original building, and it is used solely for furniture. With the exception of appliances, Steger's carries everything needed to completely furnish the interior of a home.

The city of Pekin is also served by a large number of insurance agencies—far more than there is space here to discuss. One of the older agencies was born in 1930, when J. Logan Unland became a full time agent of Aetna Life Insurance Company under the general agency of Lester O. Schriver of Peoria. A downtown office on 12 South Fourth Street was

opened in 1941, and in 1957 the agency occupied the property at its present location, 804 Court Street. Through the 44 years of its existence, this agency has contributed to the financial protection of the community. President J. Logan Unland, his son James J. Unland, and Charles P. Karch, who joined the agency in 1958, have all contributed substantially to the growth of the business, with the result that Unland's has become one of the area's leading writers of fire and casualty insurance.

The Dooley Insurance Agency, Incorporated, is the culmination of W. L. Dooley's purchase of four other agencies, which he added to his own business founded in 1939. The largest of these four agencies is of special interest in this publication, for it had been operated by one Louis C. Schurman, whose predecessors had been in business during the latter half of the 1800's. Among mementos from this firm is a handwritten schedule of articles listed in the July 30, 1867, fire loss of a minister. He claimed two \$75 feather beds, bonnets, cloaks, and two sets of "bedroom crockery." In 1955 Dooley purchased and remodeled the business' present location at 706 Court Street. It is one of Pekin's oldest buildings and is a feature of the Chamber of Commerce's pictorial slide presentation of the city.



*This is downtown Pekin looking East on Court between Capitol and Fourth Streets*

In 1939 Orville Jones came to Pekin in search of a suitable location in which to start a jewelry business in conjunction with his brother Earl. Since he was unfamiliar with the area, he stopped at the John M. Goar Agency to see if any useable sites were available. Much as Goar wanted to see a new business



dences that it is today. Three realty firms established at about the same time have contributed greatly to the city's development, but their consideration here is not meant to belittle the contributions of the other real estate firms (many of which got their starts from these three) for all of their roles in Pekin's development have been noteworthy.

Thomas H. Harris, a Pekin real estate broker and developer since 1945, can trace his family's associations with land dealings back to his grandfather John Harris' gift of 20 acres of land and \$2,000 to secure Tremont as the Tazewell County Seat (an idea upon which Harris himself capitalized in the soon-to-be discussed development of Country Club Estates). Initially, Harris was affiliated with the Maurer and Harris Real Estate firm for over 12 years before branching out on his own, and from 1945 until 1968 he served as a loan correspondent for First Federal Savings and Loan Association of Peoria.

In 1946, Harris was sales agent for Radio City Development Company, which constructed 169 homes north of Pekin; then, he initiated Meadow View Addition and other small subdivisions in which more than 180 Best Homes were erected. In the early 1950's he was instrumental in development of Lake Arlan, and in the latter '50's he developed Field Grove subdivision on Springfield Road in East Peoria, as well as

Sheridan Estates and Sheridan Hills, east of Pekin. Perhaps his most daring venture was the Country Club Estates development, an addition involving 313 acres of farm land, which was begun with the sale of 150 acres of land to the Pekin Country Club for the sum of \$1.00 on the condition that it be used to build a new Country Clubhouse and golf course. The gamble was that members would want to build on the choice sites surrounding the Club, and the growth of the development has proven the risk to have been well worth taking. Harris has also been involved in the development of Country Club Manor, an extension of Country Club Estates made up of duplex luxury apartments. Most recently, he is engaged with Robert B. Monge in the development of Pekin Edgewater Park, a commercial and light industry subdivision in the north part of Pekin.

Monge, Harris' partner in this venture, is also a well-established realtor. In the spring of 1946 Robert and his brother, Emile B. Monge, Sr., started their business by building four houses. Approximately 30 homes were built within the next three years, and then the two brothers entered the subdivision business and developed Lawndale Subdivision in 1949 and 1950. There they established their first office, which served the business with several additions until December of 1971, when they moved downtown into the



*The Harris Real Estate office, located on the corner of Margaret and Fourth Streets introduced modern architecture to downtown Pekin*

*First Federal Savings & Loan Ass'n. of Pekin*



*Various shops come and go, but the Arcade Building remains a constant part of downtown Pekin*



*Holiday Inn of Pekin*



Bureau, a row of luxury condominiums, and numerous other commercial facilities, including some still on the drawing board.

Recently, the Olt & Griffin Agency has purchased the Powers-Murphy land at the east edge of Pekin along the Allentown Road for further expansion and development, but their most significant contribution to Pekin has been the Pekin Mall, the city's newest and largest retail center, which is an appropriate subject with which to close the discussion of Pekin's businesses.

The steps involved in completing such a major undertaking as the construction of a mall as large as Pekin's are indeed complicated. It took eight years from the time the idea was first conceived for the Pekin Mall to be completed and opened for business. Olt had been concerned for some time over the amount of Pekin retail business going to other cities, and when he heard a rumor that Sears was interested in coming to Pekin, he promptly proposed a number of possible sites. The site on which Arlan's was eventually built was ruled too small. The ground on the east side of Route 29, which Olt & Griffin were at that time developing into the Pekin Commercial Park, was on the wrong side of the road, but the 60 acres on which the Mall was eventually built seemed a possible location. Finally, Sears decided to go ahead and build on the site, but they preferred to lease rather than to buy the land. Olt and Griffin were admonished to be patient, for Sears' projects were usually two to three years in the planning.

Then Olt was contacted by Irving Blitt from Kansas City, Missouri, representing the Copaken Developing Company, a firm which builds shopping centers, indicating that they were interested in buying or leasing the land. One of the requirements that had to be met before the option was good was to clear up all the coal and mineral rights to the area. That alone took four months. Then the developer wanted fire and police protection, so the land had to be annexed to the city.

At first, Olt and Griffin considered asking Pekin Heights' residents to petition for annexation, but that idea was rejected because of possible delays if the move were fought in court. Then William Waldmuer, now mayor but then a city commission member, suggested buying a lot of land behind Pekin Heights, inside the city, and this was ultimately done.

The next obstacle was getting permission of the Greater Illinois Light Corporation, which had title to the land. The corporation, War, Wisconsin, had been the first to develop the area, and it was not until 1964 that the city was able to get the necessary permission to build the mall.

By 1964, the city was rezoned the area for commercial use. The first two fast-food restaurants were not opened until that year.

Blitt began working on or tentatively negotiating with Bergner's, Penney's and others, trying to piece together a shopping center plan, for site location, work, and conducting market surveys. Once Bergner's was secured, Blitt said it would be a couple of years or so before the project was continued because he had other shopping centers to build. But under pressure from Olt and Griffin, Blitt designated another developer to get the project underway. And that is how Simon and Associates of Indianapolis, Indiana, came into the operation.

Three or four months' delay occurred before Blitt closed negotiations with Bergner's and Penney's to allow Simon to take over. During this period of time, Sears dropped out of the picture and a year ago built a small catalog and appliance store in the Sunco Shopping Plaza.

In July of 1967 Bergner's announced that they would have an 823,000 square foot store in the complex, expandable to 1,600,000. Also in that month the Simon firm filed the incorporation papers of the Pekin Mall, Incorporated, in the Tazewell County Recorder's office. In December of 1968, Penney's lease for a 132,228 square foot store in the center was recorded. Ground was finally broken in January of 1971. General contractor was the Law Construction Company of Wichita, Kansas.

The city also became involved in the project. The State Sanitary Water Board had stopped further development of local residential and business areas until some improvement in sewerage treatment facilities was guaranteed. With \$408,000 in federal grants from the Department of the Interior and \$218,933 from the State of Illinois added to the promise that sewerage treatment facilities developed would serve Hobbs Hills, Sunset Hills, Greendale, and Broadmoor Heights as well as the shopping center, approval was granted for development of a new trunk line to tie into the city sewage system. The city also brought about the widening of Route 2 to four lanes past the shopping center, and work on that was completed last winter.

With the eight years of time and trouble over the mall, well over the 7,500,000 square foot of floor space and 1,600,000 square feet of parking, the Pekin Mall is now open to the public. The first store to open was Bergner's, followed by Penney's, and then the Sears store. The first store to open in the new center was the Sunco Shopping Plaza, which was built by the city. The first store to open in the new center was the Sunco Shopping Plaza, which was built by the city.

are joined by an enclosed mall that is climate-controlled at 72 year round. There is a blacktopped parking area for 3,000 cars.

The Chamber of Commerce projection for retail sales in Pekin in 1974 is nearly \$130.5 million. With

the Pekin Mall as a drawing card and the plans for downtown restoration in the near future, the business potential of our city in the years to come is certainly promising.



*These aerial and interior views of the Pekin Mall give some idea of the spaciousness it affords area shoppers*



## 5 *Industry*

Pekin has long been recognized as an ideal site for industrial location and expansion. Because of its easy accessibility by land, rail, and water, Pekin has been chosen by many a firm to locate a plant. It should be noted, however, that many of these industries are agriculturally based, in that the product manufactured is either a direct refinement of grain, such as whiskey and corn syrup, or an indirect by-product, such as barrels or boxes in which to store and ship the various commodities.

Many of these industries have long since become defunct, for a variety of reasons. Before entering a discussion of Pekin's current industry, it seems appropriate to mention some of the old ones which played such a vital role in the city's development, not only from a financial or economic standpoint, but from a social one as well, since many of these industries brought to Pekin some of its leading citizens.

One of the first industries to appear in Pekin, on a large scale, was the L. & H. Smith Company. It was a family affair, with brothers Leis, Henry, and Fred, together with brother-in-law Lappe Lappen, initially establishing a blacksmith and woodworking shop on the corner of Third and Ann Eliza Streets. They were later joined by cousin Habbe Velde and youngest brother D. C. Smith. Steam power was out of the question, and a familiar sight then was a horse which walked around a ring from morning until night, furnishing the power for certain mechanical operations.

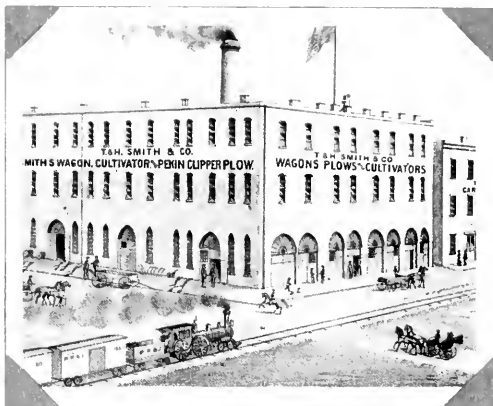
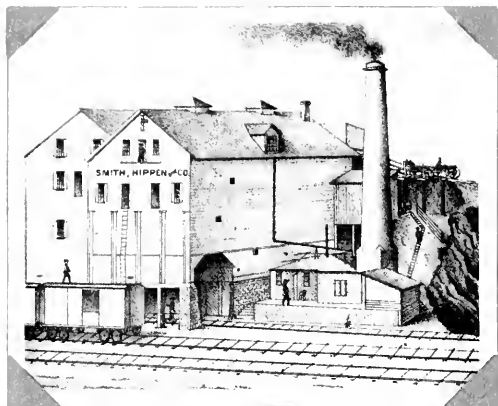
Starting with the manufacture of farm wagons, buggies, carriages, plows, and agricultural implements, the business grew rapidly and accounted for a

great number of the German immigrants to this city, who came to practice their Old World crafts at the Smith Industries. Gradually the business took on banking, dealing in grain, and general merchandising.

As the business grew, it became advisable to separate the various departments. Some of the direct offshoots of what must have been Pekin's closest approximation to a conglomerate 100 years ago follow. Smith, Hippen and Company, grain dealers, organized in 1857; Smith, Velde & Company, dealers in hardware and agricultural implements, organized in 1858; Teis Smith & Company, bankers, organized in 1866; and the Smith Plow Company (later to become the Pekin Plow Company), manufacturers of plows and cultivators, organized in 1875. The parent company of L. & H. Smith & Company confined themselves exclusively to the manufacture of wagons and buggies (about 8,000 annually) which were shipped throughout the United States; the Pekin Plow was reportedly one of the best known brands of its time.

Also of note along the agricultural implement line was the firm of P. Weyhrich and Company, which was located at the corner of Broadway and 14th Streets. The industry produced about 700-800 Weyhrich Headers (reapers) per year. In 1879, they boasted a colossal 80 horse power engine at their plant, one of the bigger in the area.

These, of course, are long since gone. But their impact on Pekin cannot be overstated. Likewise, there were several other industries which should be discussed—all relics of a bygone age: the ice industry, coal mining, distilling and brewing, and barrel-making.



*Smith industries, including several besides the two pictured here, comprised a major portion of the city's business community.*

ing, to name but a few. It might also be of interest to some that an 1861 City Directory listed two manufacturers of furniture—Stolz and Schilling Company and C. and J. Umdenstock Company—as well as a John McCarthy, manufacturer of washing machines.

Not soon to be forgotten among Pekin's old industries is its ice cutting and shipping operation. Pekin used to be one of the major supply sources for southern markets, especially St. Louis; the ice was shipped down the river on large barges. Pekin Lake's shore was literally lined with ice houses, built along Gravel Ridge. They were huge affairs, capable of holding some 20,000 tons each. All were owned by the W. A. Boley Company, Inc., who had purchased the business from John Lowmy in 1866.

Seven years later, the Boley Company bought the lake for \$5,000, and retained the exclusive rights (through the Otto Koch Estate) until the early 1950's, when it was purchased by the Forest Park Foundation, who donated it to the state for recreational purposes. All of the Boley ice houses were destroyed during a fire that

in 1904. (Pekin Lake, like Ararat, today is the Grand Anthonys, a summer resort with a sandy beach, a clubhouse, and a swimming pool. Several years ago, the town of Pekin was flooded by a record-breaking spring melt.)

For the most part, the ice business was a family affair. The Boleys were descended from a family of German immigrants who had come to the United States in the 18th century.

*Cutting ice for the Boley Company was a cold job, for men and horses alike.*



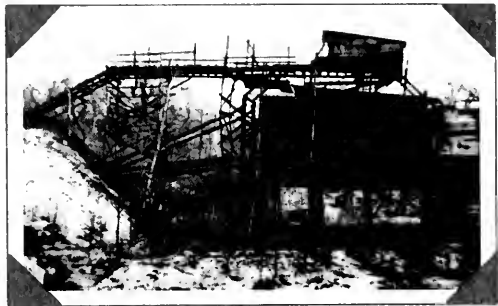
Ice could be stored in a tank for 100 years through a process which involved packing the frozen water in sawdust and salt. When it was taken from the tank, it was packed in sawdust and salt, and then shipped to the market. The ice was used for a variety of purposes, including keeping food fresh and for medical purposes. The Boley Company was one of the largest ice cutting and shipping companies in the world at the time.



es of the "East Bluff." Rundle later opened one near the present Mineral Springs Motel. That site was also known as Bohlander's, whose operator was President of the Illinois Mining Board in 1913. Dini also operated that mine for a time.

The Hope Mine operated from about 1866 to after 1889 along the tracks of the Chicago, Pekin and Southwestern Railroad (now Santa Fe). Alexander's mine was nearby and eventually the two were combined. The dump (slag pile) still exists near the #6 tee at the Parkview Golf Course.

Along what is now South 14th Street Road were several small mines. The two operated by Nathan Hawley were very important from about 1868 to 1895. At one time a special tramway hauled the coal one-half mile west to Hawley Station on the Chicago and Alton.



*This picture of the Lick Creek mine was taken in 1949 after it had been closed down for several years.*

Pekin Mining Company, it was one of the last to close (around 1951). At the top of the bluff on the Broadway Road from 1914 to the 30's was the Champion Mine (now #1 tee at Parkview).

Probably the most extensive mine was operated by the Duggan Brothers along the east side of the Peoria and Eastern Railroad, where Tazewell Street enters the present-day Rosenberg Acres. They maintained an office on Court Street, several houses near the mine, and an office and scales at 205 North Fourth Street. Also known as the Tazewell Mining Company, they produced more than 100,000 tons of coal per year from about 1902 until 1925.

In the Lick Creek area were several small mines from pioneer days. Deppert, Dissman, and others developed commercial operations there before 1900. The last was the Lick Creek Mine of the Crociani family, which shut down during World War II. To the north, along what became Route 98, approximately one mile east of the Chicago and Alton (I.C.G.), was another extensive mine. This Lakeside Mine, which closed in 1954, was the last to shut down. Its dump area is now used as an archery range.

Pekin miners also worked in the Phoenix, the Crescent mines, and the Groveland mines where Creve Coeur and Marquette Heights now are; as well as the Orchard Mines, Hollis, Shall's, Bismarck, and Wolschlag's along the tracks up to Collier (now Bartonville); and they also made up a large part of the work force in the various mines up the LaMarsh Creek, especially #1 and #6 which closed operations in the early 1950's. Mining has since then been confined to areas to the west in Peoria and Fulton Counties.

Mining was hard work: 10 to 12 hours per day with



*The Grant Mine, located north of the city, changed hands several times, but was one of the last of the coal operations to close down.*

The David Grant mine was sunk about 1910 at what is now the "Rose Garden" on East Broadway, but, because of soil conditions, a second shaft had to be dug east of that. Later known as "Schaefer's" or

no machines to help (until about 1910) and poor air, not to mention the danger of rockfalls and flooding. Dozens of men lost their lives and hundreds were injured in the mines. But without the coal they brought to the surface, there would have been no gas works, no industry, no heat for homes, virtually no steamboats after 1870, and none of the development of the region into its present position of economic and cultural leadership.

No longer do Pekin children have "miner's fun" on the Fourth of July: a nickel's worth of carbide from Dad's lamp and an old tin can were all that was needed to have a "bang-up" holiday.

The distilling and brewing industry, though still a part of Pekin through the soon-to-be discussed American Distillery, is no longer the thriving business in terms of sheer numbers it once was. References are made to a distillery established several years prior to 1849, and again to the "well-known McIntyre Distillery purchased in 1867 by the Hon. David T. Thompson and destroyed by a fire in 1871." An 1870 city directory, however, refers to it as the Kennilworth Distillery. That same publication lists C. J. D. Rupert as proprietor of the Hamburg Distillery. In 1886, the Enterprise Distillery was destroyed by fire.

The list goes on, with various references to distilling operations started in Pekin during the 1870's and the 1890's. In 1870 the Phillip Herget Malt House was established, and a year later the Pekin Distilling Company began operations. The year 1891 saw at least

three more names added to the list. The Star Distillery, the Crescent Distillery, and the Globe Distilling Company. The latter, founded by George and John Herget, later became a yeast plant and ultimately the Standard Brands. And in 1892, the American Distilling Company was started by John Wilson and Son. Many of the aforementioned companies became parts of other, larger companies.

There was also established in 1870 the Winkler Brewing Company, located at the foot of Caroline Street. In connection with this was a large storage cellar located at the foot of the hill on which the East Campus of Pekin High School stands today. Beer from the brewery was brought to the cellar in barrels and then run by hose into large hoghead for aging. This procedure was abandoned in later years after an underground spring broke through and flooded the cellar.

The old Winkler Brewery was purchased in 1900 by a group from Chicago, and became the American Brewing Company. The malt house was converted into a bottling department, where many a bottle of "Pekin Prima" beer was prepared for consumption throughout the state. The brewery, which eventually came under Herget ownership, ceased operations about 1916.

A natural companion of the distilling industry is the cooper (barrel-making) industry. The Pekin Steam Cooperage Company, another of the many Herget family enterprises in our city, was founded in 1889.



*The Star Distillery*



*The American Brewing Company, bottlers of Pekin Prima Beer*

Over 100 men found employment in the "Cooper Shop," which was located on the present site of the Kroger/Cohen Furniture Complex. To provide the company with material, the Pekin Stave and Manufacturing Company was established—in Paragould, Arkansas. With the coming of prohibition, the business went out, and the factory was sold to the Montgomery Ward Company, who established the Hummer Saddlery, which burned out in 1924 and was rebuilt as the Pekin Leather Products Company, a local firm headed by Ed Auferheide. In addition, the site has served as a distribution center for food for the needy during hard times, and as the Kriegsman Warehouse.



Pekin's "Cooper Shop"

Before the time of the automobile, another of Pekin's thriving industries was the livery stable trade. Some of the more noted over the years were Stickley's, Kelly's, DeVore's, Crittenden's, and the Palace, the latter being run by Dr. G. Z. Barnes, a veterinary surgeon. All of these included as a large item in their services the furnishing of funeral coaches and horses to pull the hearses.

Cigar manufacturing was an industry of some magnitude in Pekin. As late as 1914, a city directory listed 11 names of men who made their living through the manufacture of cigars. Probably the last of these to go out was the Gehring Company, as the firm, still in the family, was in the tobacco business until destroyed by fire in 1971 (discussed in Catastrophes Unit).

Another of Pekin's bygone industries is the manufacture of brick and tile. Pekin had two such enterprises at one time, the most famous of which was J. L. Jansen's Company which was located on the East Side. Millions of bricks used for building many of Pekin's early businesses and residences were supplied from that location. Such is the case because of the fact that it was to be found in the area.

The turn of the century also found Pekin the location of a flour milling plant. The Pekin Roller Mills was owned by J. W. Sarff, and made flour from wheat grown by Izewell County farmers.

Several foundries which no longer exist played a vital role in Pekin's growth. One of the more noted of these was the Duisdicker Foundry. Located on the corner of Third and Sabella Streets, it was operated by Charles Duisdicker, who also served Pekin as its Mayor. In an article which appeared in *Pekin Post Tribune* in 1900, it was reported that the firm manu-



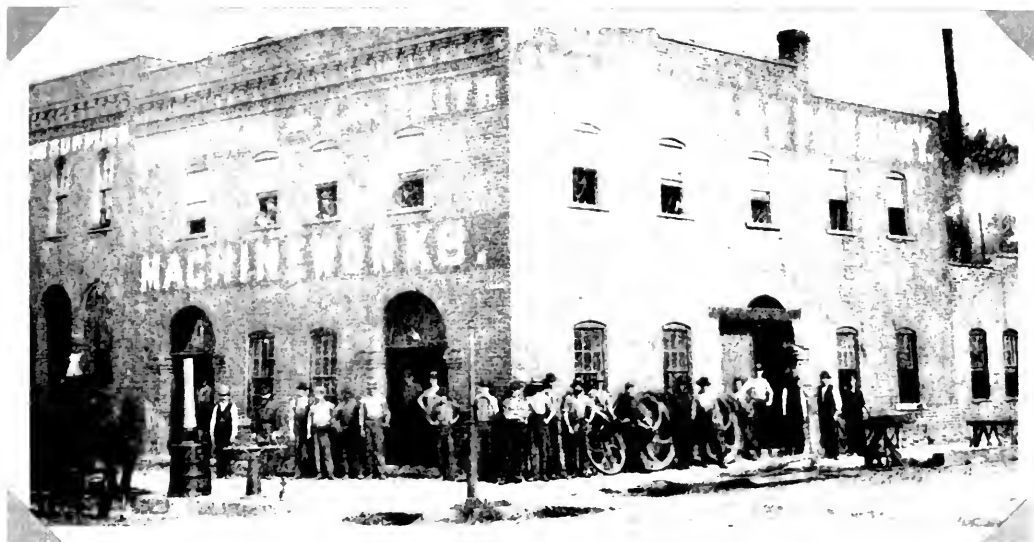
These funeral coaches were one of the many services offered by Dr. Barnes Palace Livery Stable

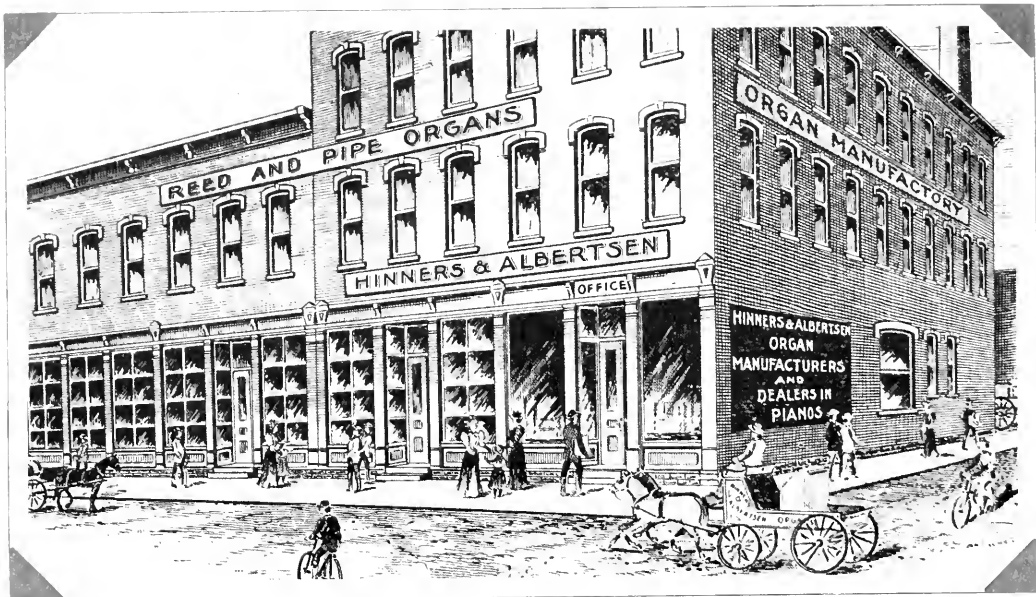


No cigars around the corner in Pekin were complete without a wooden chair in front of the Gehring Company

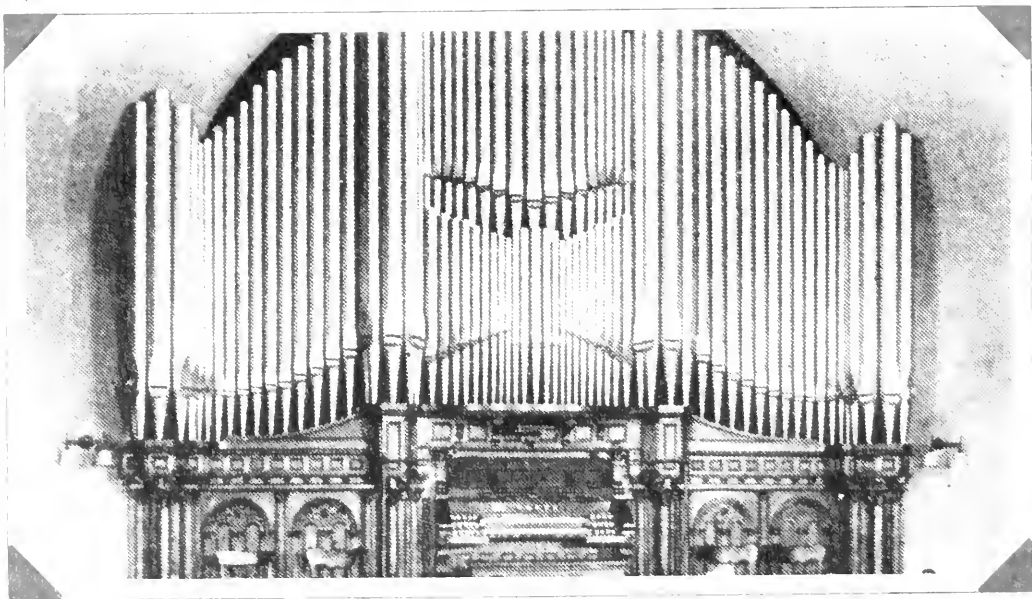


The Steel Works, Pittsburgh, Pa.



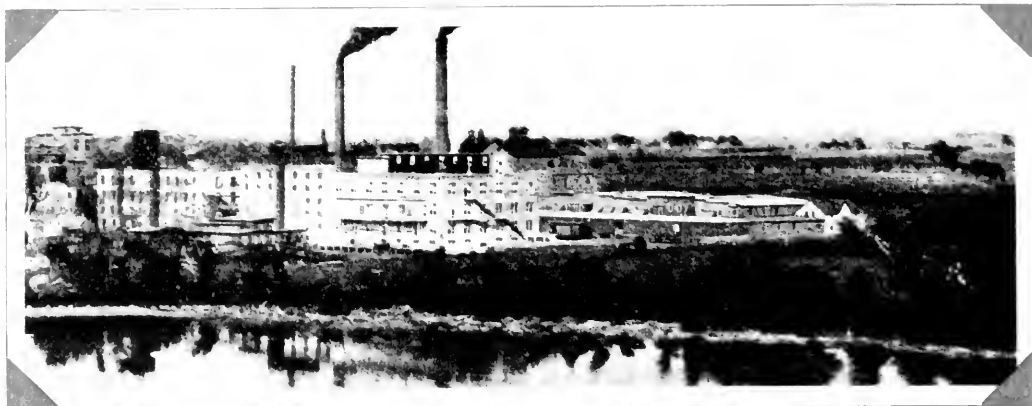


*The Hinners & Albertsen Company, above, was famous for its handcrafted instruments, but not all of them were as ostentatious as the one pictured below*









*In this photo are several items from Pekin past. The Standard Brands plant in the center of the picture emptied its industrial waste into Dead Lake in the foreground. The white specks in the small clearing on the right-hand side of the picture are gravestones in the long since abandoned City Cemetery.*

Hinners' Organ is a prized possession of many a church and antique collector.

The last industry to be discussed in this segment of the chapter terminated its operations in Pekin less than three years ago. As mentioned earlier, the Globe Distillery was started in the "Gay Nineties" by the Hergets. They in turn sold it to the Kentucky Distributing and Warehouse Company about 1903, and the plant was known as the Standard Distilling and Distributing Company until June 6, 1919, when U.S. Foods bought the operation and set up the Liberty Yeast Company. This operation converted grain into foodstuffs for both man and livestock. (There were, at one time, huge cattle-feeding lots on the site, where thousands of straggly Texas longhorns were shipped to be fattened on a by-product of wet feed simply called "slop." Later, this slop was heat-treated, and the more common variety of "dry feed" was developed.)

In 1926, the Fleishmann's Yeast division of Standard Brands, Inc. bought out the industry, and by 1927 a complete renovation and remodeling program had taken place. The major product was compressed yeast, although the firm also manufactured malt syrup and dry malt. These were sold to bakeries, candy makers, brewers, and dried-egg manufacturers throughout this country and the world. A curious sidelight to this operation merits telling. When Fleishmann's took over the operation from Liberty, there was a vinegar building on the site, which had been built with the intention of making and selling the

product. In fact, much vinegar was made, but never a drop was sold, since the new firm chose not to enter that field. At one time also, the plant packaged coffee, probably the Chase and Sanborn brand.

Unfortunately for Pekin in general and the 300 employees of Standard Brands in particular, the company in recent years was faced with either expending vast sums of money to modernize old equipment and meet new ecology requirements set down by state and federal agencies, or moving the operation elsewhere. They chose the latter, and December 31, 1971, was the last day of operation of the Pekin plant. Many workers were transferred, many others took early retirement, and still others, refusing to leave Pekin, sought employment elsewhere. The buildings, now vacant, (in fact, they are for sale) stand as a grim reminder of the importance that industry has played in Pekin's development, and what can happen when a major employer leaves the area.

The Soldwedel Dairy operation lends itself well to providing a transition between the Pekin industries of yesteryear and the ones in operation today; for, in a way, it belongs to both categories. A history of the organization will explain how it manages to assume such a dual role more clearly than anything further we might say at this point.

In 1866 Timm Soldwedel moved to America from Germany and eventually settled on the Aydelot (later Herget) farm east of Pekin on Broadway Road in 1875. He bought out the Zimmerman Dairy, which was then operating from the Aydelot property, and

his daughter Dora, later a well-known Eganville milkmaid, started delivering milk by horse and wagon to the people in town. In the winter the milk often froze in the cans in her wagon, and in the summer two deliveries a day were necessary to assure that the milk would be sweet when it arrived at its destination. It was hauled in large cans, and the customers, on hearing the "milkman's" bell, brought pitchers, pails, or pails to be filled at the wagon for a nickel a quart.

Around the turn of the century, Timm's son, Fred H. Soldwedel, took over the dairy operation and moved it to the Heilman farm on South Fifth Street. In 1905 Soldwedel's began packaging their product, working from a building on the corner of Elizabeth and Third Streets. In 1910 the dairy moved to 1400 North Capitol and in 1915 to 9 North Fifth. This location was operated as a partnership between Fred H. Soldwedel, hereafter referred to as Fred Sr., and Fred Jr. as discussed in the Business Units and his oldest son Paul. Here Pekin's first pasteurized milk was produced.

In 1920 the business expanded when Fred Sr. and his next son, Carl, started Pekin's first whole cream, cream and butter factory at 501 Elizabeth. Fred Sr.'s father-in-law, Henry Reiding, had, on treated the

factory with a special process to make it safe for milk. Fred Sr. and Carl, along with Reiding, owned the factory until 1926, when Fred Sr. sold it to the Reiding family. The Soldwedel family moved out of Pekin, and Reiding, of the Soldwedel Creamery, later changed the name of the factory.

Before the Soldwedels moved there, the factory, governed by Paul, used their butter and the milk delivered by farmers, and the cream had been supplied since the Zerwekh Brothers at 25 South Fourth presented the Times Building. Cream was available year-round at their store, just down the street from the Zerwekh's stores in all but the winter months, when the milk fountain was closed with a sign that read for Christmas displays.

In the '70's Zerwekh's stopped making cream and the new Soldwedel operation resumed the supply of milk on a much larger scale. In the early 1980's, after retirement, Sundays were especially busy at the store. Mother wanted to serve ice cream at the traditional weekly family dinners. So early Sunday morning, Soldwedel's would park ice cream trucks outside and had ice helped in the truck to serve the customers all over town. As modern refrigeration made it possible, they stocked local stores with their cream.



The American Fur Trade Company's fur trading post in Eganville, Illinois. Fur trails at Eganville.

In 1955 Carl left Pekin and opened a Soldwedel's Dairy in Canton. At that time, the milk plant moved to 301 Elizabeth to join the creamery operation, and brothers Tim and Henry joined their father and Paul in the Pekin plant. Also at this time, the "Del" label was adopted and the dairy added cheddar cheese to its list of products, making as much as six tons daily until the plant was sold to the Borden chain in 1955. This ends the story of the original Pekin Soldwedel Dairy.

But in 1965 Carl (having been joined in business by his son John in 1949) returned the Soldwedel name to dairy operations in Pekin when he acquired the former Pekin Dairy on South Second Street. Since then, the fifth generation has joined the operation, with the addition of John's son Steve in 1970. Ice cream "mix" produced in Canton is sent to Pekin to be frozen, and from here it is distributed throughout central Illinois. It is interesting to note that when Carl first started in the dairy business, raw materials were supplied by over 500 farmers from Bloomington to the Mississippi River. Today, thanks to advanced production methods and modernized herd care, 50 local farmers are able to provide 50% of the materials used in the Canton operation. Minnesota and Iowa farmers supply the balance.

Thus, Soldwedel's belongs to both old and new eras of Pekin industry. And perhaps calling the industries discussed hereafter part of a new era is slightly misleading, for Pekin's two larger industries were founded before the turn of the century. However, they do

belong to a new era insofar as they have survived to experience automation, inflation, and "environmental protection."

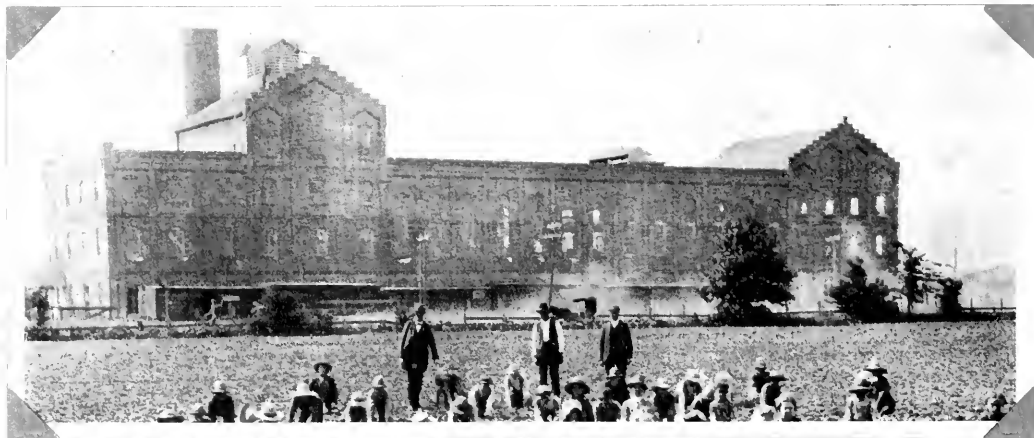
In 1892, the American Distilling Company was born and erected a plant on the site formerly occupied by one of Pekin's first distilleries, the Hamburg. The company expanded in 1908 by absorbing a conglomerate of three other distilleries, including the Hamburg.

During World War I, the plant converted to the production of industrial alcohol for the war effort. (Industrial alcohol and other vital war materials were also produced during World War II.) The American carried its Pekin plant through prohibition by continuing to produce industrial as well as medical alcohols.

On December 4, 1933, the American resumed whiskey production, at the same time initiating a building program. Records indicate that this return to production created more jobs and payroll moneys than the NRA code and provided more local construction than the PWA.

Today, the American continues to produce high-quality whiskeys, using selected yeast strains, high-quality grains, and limestone water from the plant's own wells. The Distillery still uses the processing methods developed by the experienced craftsmen of years gone by; however, in keeping with today's ranging tastes, products from Spain, Scotland, Ireland, Canada, Mexico, and the Virgin Islands are imported for processing and bottling in Pekin.

The company still has its roots here, but has ex-



This is photo of Illinois Sugar Refining Company. Sugar harvesters are working in some of the 3,000 acres owned by the company. The plant would produce about 100,000 tons of sugar a year. 14 hours a day 700 tons of beets. Average wage - \$2 per hour.





*This is the home office of the Pekin Insurance Company, which has grown from 187 policyholders to 500,000 in four different states.*

to wholesale bakeries, canneries, breweries, and confectioners all over the nation, as well as to paper and adhesive manufacturers, and even the makers of chewing gum. CPC products go into such brand names as Niagara starch, Skippy peanut butter, Mazola oil and margarine, Karo syrup, Knorr soups, and Rit dyes.

Corn Products has continually modernized and expanded the plant as the need has arisen. Furthermore, the organization is as concerned with improving its old products as it is with developing new ones. In recent years, the industry has stayed attuned to the tempo of the times by investing in environmental protection measures, including large expenditures for a new sewage disposal plant and devices to retard air and noise pollution.

In 1921 when a new Chevrolet cost \$850, 40 m.p.h. was highway cruising speed, traffic jams and "tail-gating" were unknown, and liquor was illegal, conditions were ideal for launching an automobile insurance company; and so, on April 1, 1921, a group of Pekinites did just that. The Farmers Automobile Insurance Association, parent company of Pekin Insurance, was organized by the Tazewell County Farm Bureau. The first office was a single room in the Tazewell County Court House, donated by the County Board of Supervisors and manned by a part-time secretary. There were 187 policies in force, and the six-month premium was five dollars for fire, lightning, windstorm, full-coverage collision, property damage, and bodily injury!

The company grew rapidly. By 1932 there were 7,000 policyholders, and "24-hour claim service" was initiated. By 1939 there were 20,000 policies in effect, and a 100,000 sq. ft. building completed on the first home office building, a two-story structure at the corner of

South Capitol and St. Mary Streets. In less than 10 years, it was necessary to add two additional stories to the structure.

In 1952 fire insurance was added to auto insurance as a new line of coverage, and the company continued to grow. Inland Marine Coverages were added, and the Pekin Insurance Company was formed and joined Farmers Auto. A third company, FAS, Inc., a premium finance company, was organized, and later, Pekin Farmers Life Insurance Company. In 1968 the group name, "Pekin Insurance," was adopted to cover the combined operations of all of these organizations.

In 1966 the home office of Pekin Insurance moved into a new building constructed on 10 1/2 acres of land on the east side of Route 9 at 2505 Court. Since then, the office has been expanded by 50% through an addition to the original building. The Pekin Insurance operation protects over 300,000 policyholders in four states, served by over 425 Pekin Insurance Agencies. There are about 340 employees working in the home office and the 10 service offices.

One of the most imposing and fastest growing of Pekin's industries is the Commonwealth Edison Company's Powerton Station, more commonly referred to by local residents as simply "Powerton" or "Super Power." Located about four miles south of Pekin on the Illinois River, the supplier of much of northern Illinois' electrical energy began operation here with exploratory drilling and construction of a building large enough to house the first four units (turbines) in 1927.

The first of these units was completed and connected to the Edison system in 1928. The second and third were finished and put into operation within the next 27 months. The fourth unit, which ultimately gave the plant a capacity of 335,000 kilowatts, had its

scheduled completion date severely retarded by the depression years of the 1930's.

Unit Four was eventually made functional in 1940, which was about the same time that a 230,000 volt transmission line between Powerton and Chicago was completed. At that time, the line carried the highest transmission voltage on the Edison system.

The original plant employed 81 workers, and at its peak provided jobs for 400. With the coming of more sophisticated automatic equipment, the number has stabilized at approximately 230.

For a period of nearly 30 years, the plant operated with the aforementioned capacities, but in late October of 1968, Edison management announced a tremendous expansion program, the ramifications of which are still being felt, and probably will be for the next few years, not only because of the gigantic boost in size and output for Powerton, but also because of the large number of jobs supplied by the construction of the new facilities.

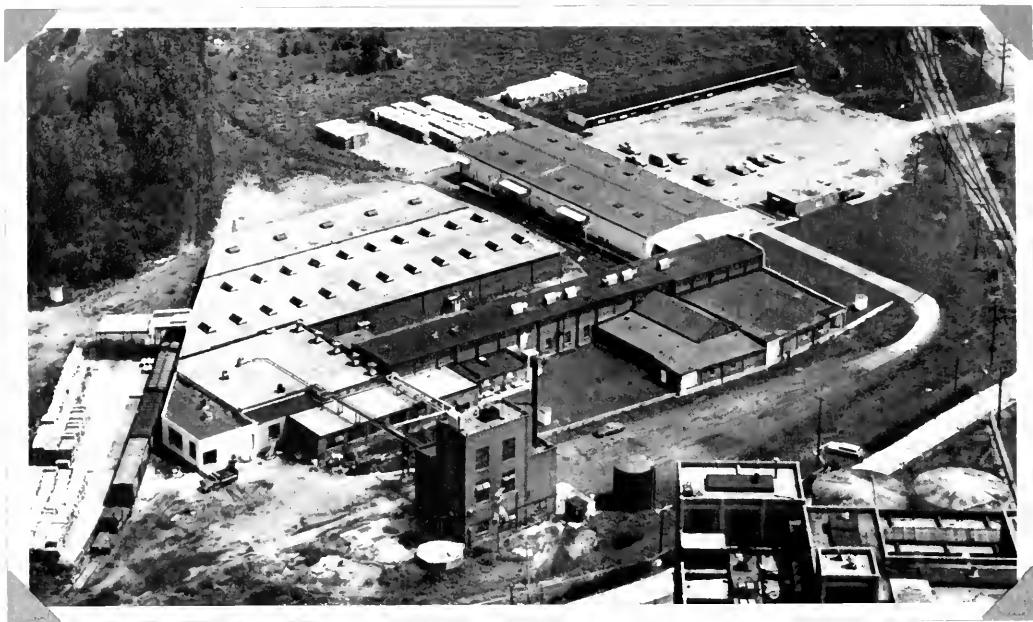
The first new unit, Unit Five, was begun on August 8, 1969, a \$100 million, 800 megawatt project which was completed and put on the system May 12, 1972. Before that project was even completed, plans were revealed for a second, identical generation unit (Unit 6), and a completion date of mid-1975 is projected for it.

The two units will give the plant a 1,600 megawatt capacity, that's 1,600,000 kilowatts, if you're compar-

ing, and a B.T.U. 545,000 volts in 9000 m.c.u. In order to provide cooling water for the colossal units, Edison has constructed a 1,500-acre, closed-circuit lake, abandoning use of the Illinois River for that function. The building site itself occupies another 650 acres. Coal is delivered daily to Powerton in 100-ton railway cars, from which coal is automatically dumped and conveyed to its destined unit. The local plant consumes the entire production of a sizable coal mine, 7,000 to 8,000 tons per day, which will double when Unit Six becomes operational.

The most recent development at the Pekin plant was the disclosure in late February of this year of plans to build a large-scale test facility for converting coal to gas. This \$20 million project, funded in part by the Electric Power Research Institute, will combine a Lurgi gasification system with a purification process to remove nine-tenths of the coal's sulfur content. It will be able to convert about 60 tons of coal an hour into a clean, low B.T.U. gas suitable as a boiler fuel for a 70,000 kilowatt generating unit. Testing operations are scheduled to begin by the end of 1976. Plans call for the Powerton system to produce gas by reacting coal under pressure with a mixture of air and steam. The gas will be passed through a clean-up system and desulfurizer before being piped to the generating unit's boiler. (Unit Four, the only one of the original units still in operation, the new unit will have a heat content about one-fifth that of





Pekin, Illinois, is home to the Quaker Oats Paper Company mill. (Quaker Oats Paper Company)

the mill. The mill is a 100-acre facility, with a 100,000-sq-ft main building, a 100,000-sq-ft warehouse, and a 100,000-sq-ft office building. The mill is a 100-acre facility, with a 100,000-sq-ft main building, a 100,000-sq-ft warehouse, and a 100,000-sq-ft office building.

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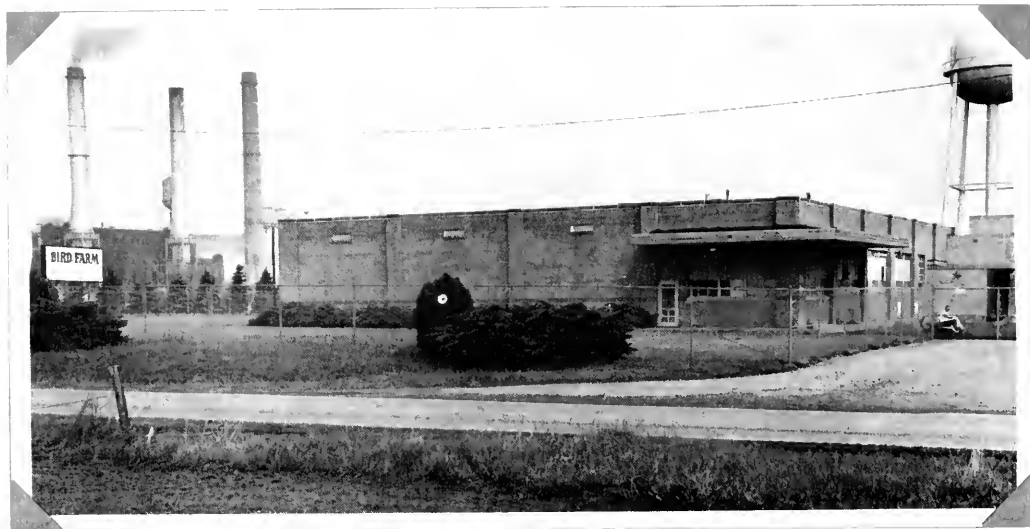
The Quaker Oats Company stayed in Pekin after the war ended, and today's 60 employees are still making paper packaging for Quaker cereals, but straw is no longer used in the process. Instead, various types of scrap paper are utilized, either the by-product of the paper industry or paper products that have been discarded and are available for recycling.

The plant underwent major rebuilding in 1948 with the construction of a new power plant and additional drying equipment, increasing production by 50%. But the most significant innovation has been the step-by-step improvement in the quality of the processing water. In 1965, a system was installed that could handle 10 million gallons of water a day. In 1968, the pollution was all but eliminated, and the mill now uses coal to produce

(Continued on page 10)



One of the smallest of these may very well be the most widely known of all Pekin industries: Hunters all over the world are well-acquainted with the Philip S. Olt Company, manufacturer of a famous line of game and bird calls. The business began in 1904 when Philip S. Olt invented a hard rubber duck call which worked so well that his friends urged him to patent it. After that, he added a crow call, and the line has continued to grow until his sons James and Arthur, who have now taken over the business, manufacture 33 different game and bird calls. The brothers still operate out of their father's home, where the business was started. Working full-time throughout the year, their 12 to 15 employees produce literally hundreds of thousands of bird calls annually, not to mention accompanying instruction records and other hunting accessories. These are sold in all 50 states, Canada, Mexico, and many other countries throughout the world. Whether they're seeking waterfowl, small game, predators, or even large animals such as moose, elk, or deer, there are few hunters who have not heard of P. S. Olt of Pekin.



*"This little piggie went to market" and if he came here he became Bird Farm whole hog sausage*

Since 1948, Bird Provision Company, a subsidiary of Vogel's Incorporated, has been producing the well-known "Bird Farm" brand of sausage. With the completion of a new packing plant on Powerton Road in 1948, the 45 employees of Bird Provision began producing the sausage, which is now marketed in 25 states. The larger operation of which this company is part is discussed in greater detail in the Business Unit.

The newest of Pekin's industries is a very small, but very lucrative venture, launched somewhat daringly by Marcel Moussalli in 1967. Operating initially out of the basement of a house on Capitol Street, Moussalli, LTD, creator of porcelain and art pieces sold throughout the U.S. and Europe, has expanded to occupy a new 10,000 square foot building at 2400 North Eighth Street. The enterprise presently employs four people and spends about \$100,000 per year in payroll and operating expenditures. Since the industry's establishment, Moussalli has also provided job opportunities for many students.

Pekin is an industrial/agricultural community, and so naturally some operations closely associated with agriculture have sprung up. As a matter of fact, there are Pekin industries catering to both ends of the farming spectrum—Sommer Brothers Seed Company produces the seed for planting, and a number of local companies produce harvested grain for market.

Tazewell County is the home of Reid's Yellow Dent, an open-pollinated variety of corn that became the grandfather of many hybrid seed lines. In 1909 Oscar and Arthur Sommer, the grandfathers of Sommer Brothers Seed Company, started their business by raising Reid's Yellow Dent. They selected the best ears, dried them on wire racks in their shop, and sold them at auction in 1910 for \$3.30 a bushel. (For the uninitiated, seed corn is considerably more expensive than that used by an industry like CPC, and today it sells for at least *ten* times that 1910 price.)

In the early 20's O. J. Sommer experimented with specific gravity and cob-breaking tests to establish a measurable basis for seed corn variety improvement. As a result, he received recognition as a pioneer in crop improvement research and became the first president of the Illinois Crop Improvement Association. Sommer Brothers Seed Company has produced and sold certified seed in the state of Illinois for the past 48 years, a record held by no other seed company.

Sommer Yellow Dent was recognized as a distinct corn variety in 1925. When hybrid foundation seed became available in the mid-50's, Sommer Brothers Seed Company switched their seed production to the new line of hybrid. Much emphasis was given to the education of customers through participation in yield contests and weekly publication of "Sommer's Seed Suggestions."



From the local plant pictured here and another one in Topeka, Kansas, the Sommer brothers ship seed all over the U.S.

In the meantime, Sommer Brothers Seed Company had also developed a sizable trade in alfalfa, clover, and grass seeds as well as seed grains, and soybeans, marketed under their Tiger Brand. Since most of the seed was grown in the West and shipped to the Pekin plant for processing, in 1948 Sommer Brothers located a processing plant at Topeka, Kansas, from which they now process and ship over one million pounds of bromic grass seed annually. From their Topeka and Pekin plants, Sommer Brothers now ship their high quality Tiger Brand seed all over the United States.

As a member of the Soybean Research Foundation and the Illinois Foundation Seeds, Inc., the production and sale of certified soybean varieties have assumed an ever increasing importance in the Sommer Brothers' business. Thousands of acres of the latest releases are grown under contract with area farmers.

In 1956 Sommer Brothers became affiliated with the Funk Brothers Seed Company of Bloomington, Illinois, as an associate producer of Funk's "G" Hybrid Corn, with sales in a local three-county area. This association was terminated June 31, 1975, and Sommer Brothers became one of seven members of Golden Harvest Seeds, Incorporated, producing Golden Harvest Hybrids for the entire Corn Belt. Today the local company employs 14 people and relies upon hundreds of area farmers to help grow the quality seed to an ever growing market.

Although the local elevator has been replaced by a modern one, the Sommer Brothers still have a large

large cash flow into the community, they do make it possible for hundreds of area farmers to market their grain, much of the proceeds from which are put into the Pekin economy.

The oldest of the present Pekin elevators is the Pekin Farmers Grain Company, which opened a 25,000-bushel-capacity elevator in 1914. In its first year the company handled 180,000 bushels of grain. Today, the plant has storage facilities for 450,000 bushels of grain and last year handled nearly 20 million bushels.

Modernized farming techniques have, of course, introduced large quantities of grain to the market that simply could not have been produced in 1914. As a result, Pekin Farmers has not only expanded its own operations to Mackinaw and Maunio, but has also been joined by other elevator operations. The Sommer Grain Company and the Tom Dreyfus Corporation are good examples of the two different types of elevators in Pekin. Sours is a small independent company, while Dreyfus is a subsidiary of a nationwide corporation. Whether the organization is large or small, Pekin's location makes it ideal for such an operation, situated as it is in such proximity to the river.

Sommer is relatively new to the Pekin industry. It found the seed and then, through experience at Pekin Farmers, learned that it was important to have a good location. The company moved to the new location in 1975. The new location is on the corner of U.S. Highway 151 and Illinois Highway 151, just north of the river.



# 6

## Utilities and Mass Communication

It is a curious phenomenon how time changes the interest and importance of various facets of a community. As recently as five years ago, items such as water, gas, electricity, and telephone service were largely taken for granted. Recent developments, however, have brought these public utilities to the forefront of public concern.

Many communities are finding themselves faced with contaminated drinking water, others are confronted with insufficient power supply for public demands, and still others are plagued with overloaded, outdated telephone equipment in an age when a telephone has become virtually a necessity rather than a luxury.

Pekin is indeed fortunate in the areas of public utilities. Certainly, everyone complains about spiraling costs, and there is no denying that Pekin, like every other growing city in America, does face a problem concerning the availability of natural gas and electricity. The phone company, itself, is quick to admit that there are areas that need improvement. But taken as a whole, and in comparison to most other cities of comparable size and growth, Pekin is more than adequately served by its utilities.

The establishment and expansion of these companies are interesting, viable parts of the development of Pekin, and we accordingly now turn our attention to this phase of our city's growth, beginning with what must be the most basic necessity for man's survival—water.

The Pekin Water Works Company has been a part

of the history of this city for the past 85 years. Having been granted a franchise from Pekin's governing body on May 24, 1886, A Certificate of Incorporation was issued about two months later from the Secretary of State to Charles A. Lamb, Chicago, and Henry S. Raymond, Galena.

The stock of the company was owned by Chicago interests, and the initial drilling of wells, installation of steam pumping equipment, construction of a distribution system, and erection of a storage tank was engineered by L. S. Alexander, a Chicago engineer.

The original installation included nine miles of cast iron mains, ranging from four inches to 14 inches in diameter, and about five miles of wrought iron mains from three-quarter to two inches in diameter, also installed were 100 fire hydrants and 32 line valves. The wells and pumping station were located on the site, tract now occupied by the office and plant, 325 Broadway.

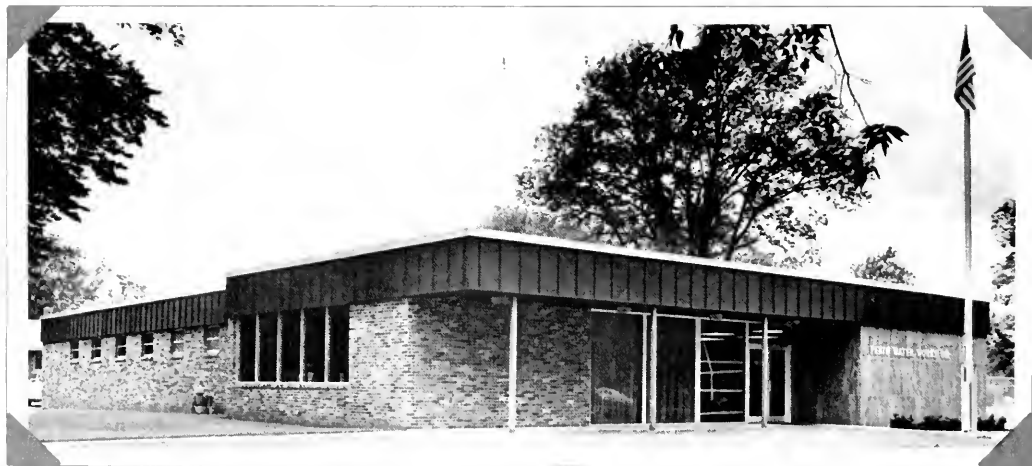
In 1887 the company was purchased by the American Water Works and Guarantee Company, Ltd., of Muncie, Indiana, and Frank C. Amsharov was appointed local superintendent. During this year, the company was at odds with the City Administration, which claimed that the wells were not drilled to "second vein" water, as the franchise provided. The city ordered a well digging firm from Chicago to drill a test well and a determination was made that "second vein" water was only a myth and that the company wells were located in a very desirable bed of artesian washed water.

Unfortunately (or perhaps fortunately for Pekin), while the company was winning legal battles, it was losing money, finding that it could not meet operating expenses and pay interest on bonds. So, in January of 1888, the owners offered the plant for sale, and the first local interest, financially speaking, was introduced when George H. Lucas and Henry Lautz purchased the controlling stock. From time to time thereafter, several Pekin business men invested in the company, but soon withdrew their support due to lack of return on their investment. Lautz, undaunted and relentless, refused to accept defeat or admit failure, and by 1901 he had purchased all of the company's stock. It has remained the property of his heirs in Pekin since that date.

In 1908 the company set its first meters, and by 1915 all customers were on a meter basis. Prior to metering, rates were determined by the number of persons, horses and cows, and the number of outlet taps for each service. Water used for sprinkling required a special rate application. Contracts were drawn with each customer in which the above data was included, and a fixed yearly charge was agreed upon. These contracts were effective for one year, and billing and collecting were done door-to-door. With the establishment of the Illinois Commerce Commission in 1914, all privately-owned water utilities were required to establish rate schedules.

The water works plant serving Pekin today is a far cry from the early plant. Seven 25-inch wells, ranging in depth from 90 to 150 feet, have replaced the old wells, whose openings were six and eight inches in diameter; and modern electric pumps with automatic controls are now used in place of the old steam-driven type. The circular stone tower (for many years a familiar Pekin landmark) that supported a steel tank holding 180,000 gallons of reserve water has been dismantled and replaced by various storage facilities with a reserve capacity of four million gallons, located throughout the city.

Some comparisons of statistics for just the 25-year period from 1949 to 1974 give a good indication of the growth of both the Pekin Water Works Company and the city it serves. In 1949 the company had a well capacity of 15 million gallons per day and a pumping capacity of eight million gallons per day; today, those figures have changed to 30 and 14, respectively. Likewise, the end of the forties saw 350 fire hydrants, while today we boast 640. Over 650 line-valves have been added in the last 25 years for a total of 1,700, insuring a minimum of interrupted service. Total number of customers served has risen from 6,100 to over 13,500 in the last quarter century. Pekin Water Works' customers use an average of four and one-half to five million gallons of water per day, although Office Manager Ron Rick reports that a peak of some 20 million gallons has been reached.



*Although the modern office to today's Pekin Water Works Company is considerably advanced from the early plant, the site at 328 Broadway on which it stands has long been the company's property.*

The 50 employees of the company work around the clock to insure adequate service, and samples are sent to the State Department of Health in Springfield for testing. Also, the water supply is chlorinated and fluoridated in accordance with state specifications.

To trace the history of gas and electric utilities in Pekin, one must go back even further than the water company, and unravel a series of companies and mergers that makes the development of the city's water utility look easy.

It was February 18, 1861, when an Act to Incorporate the Pekin Gas Light Company was approved by the Illinois General Assembly. It was four years later, however, before said company was organized, with William Stansbury as president. He served in this capacity until 1893, when the firm was sold to H. G. Herget. It was under Stansbury, though, that the first gas street lights were put in operation, and the old lamp-lighter was a familiar figure in the city from February 5, 1866, until 1888, when electric street lights replaced the old gas type.

The first electric utility, known as the Ft. Wayne Electric Light Company, was organized in 1886. A year later, the Jemmy Electric Light Company was formed and acquired all the interests of Ft. Wayne. The City of Pekin Electric Light and Power Company was started in 1891, and continued operations until its demise on March 17, 1900. In the meantime, one year earlier, the aforementioned Pekin Gas Light Company changed its name to Pekin Light, Heat and Power Company, bringing together for the first time the gas and electric properties of the city.

The union was short-lived, for in 1902 we find that gas was supplied by the Pekin Light, Heat and Power Company, while electricity was provided by the Citizens Gas and Electric Company. This separation continued until May 1, 1913, when the Central Illinois Light Company, Pekin's present-day supplier, was formed.

CHICO acquired all the interests of the Citizens Gas and Electric Company and leased the gas properties of the Pekin Light, Heat and Power Company. The latter company was dissolved in 1934, and it was at that time that our city became the Pekin District of the Peoria Division of the Central Illinois Light Company.

It should be noted here that during these "formative" years of gas and electric companies, most residential and industrial heat was generated by coal, a once-booming industry of Pekin which is discussed elsewhere in this book. Further, the amount of electricity used by the average consumer, due in part to the lack of modern appliances, was unbelievably low.

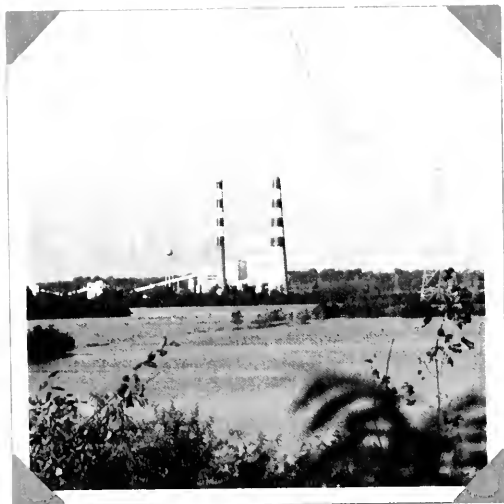


*Since this picture was taken, the CHICO office has moved a couple of blocks east on Court.*

J. L. Johnston, the Southern District Manager of CHICO stationed in the present Pekin office at 531 Court Street, reports that in 1924 an average of 217 kilowatt hours of electricity was consumed per customer per year. That compares with a present-day figure of just under 7,000 kilowatt hours per customer per year. Likewise, natural gas consumption for the same 50-year period in the Peoria Division was increased from 700 million cubic feet per year to over 51 billion cubic feet per year today.

These figures dramatically indicate two things, that CHICO has grown tremendously to keep pace with the ever-increasing demand for energy, and that there is a very understandable reason for our present energy crisis.

The generating capacity at the company's power stations has more than doubled within the last 10 years alone. Their newest and largest generating station is the F. D. Edwards plant, located just across the Illinois River from Pekin. The first generating unit at that station was completed in 1960, since then two more have been added. The last, a 350,000 kilowatt unit, was finished in 1972. The company is currently constructing a new plant about 20 miles southwest of Pekin at the Duck Creek site. Scheduled for completion in 1976, the first unit will have a generating capacity of 400,000 kilowatts.



*The F. D. Edwards station of CHCO which provides much of Pekin's power, makes in imposing sight is viewed across the river from Pekin.*

Because of the current shortage of natural gas, CHCO has stopped expanding its gas system, and it is impossible to install a natural gas heating system in any newly constructed building. However, in an attempt to keep present customers supplied, the firm is expanding its underground storage fields at Glastford and Lincoln, and continuously replacing old gas mains with corrosion-proof lines, which along with many other facets of the operation, keep the approximately 125 Pekinites employed by the company busy.

Perhaps no other single industry in the country has experienced as much change and growth in the last 25 years as the telephone companies. The development of the Central Telephone Company, the fourth largest independent telephone company in the United States out of 1,760 such enterprises, mirrors that growth. But before discussing these myriad advancements, it would seem appropriate to back-track in order to get Central Telephone to Pekin in the first place.

The year 1901 found Pekin with two competing telephone companies: Central Union Telephone Company, first on the scene, and the newly organized Citizens Telephone Company, headed by James W. Barnett. The Citizens Company also established an exchange at East Peoria, adding to their already existing stations at Havana, Mantoloking, Green

Valley, Delavan, and Lacon, connected by a system of company-owned toll lines.

The continuous growth of the community necessitated expansion of service, which meant much additional capital. Following the first World War, the telephone situation was discouraging for the citizens of Pekin, as there were two sets of telephone lines in town, yet many people seeking service could not get it until much of the outmoded equipment was replaced and the necessary expansion completed.

The Citizens Company was sold to W. S. Green and associates, who had formed a new company (still called Citizens Company). They promptly traded East Peoria and Delavan service rights to Central Union (later absorbed by the Bell System) for the "long distance phone system" in Pekin and brought in hundreds of thousands of dollars of new capital to replace the mass of bare wires in town with one of the most extensive underground cable systems to be found in a similar-sized community anywhere.

The depression years of the early thirties proved a serious blow to the company, however, and so in January of 1938 the Citizens Company was taken over by the Middle States Telephone Company of Illinois, which was a division of the Central Telephone Company (no kin to Central Union) headquartered in Des Plaines, Illinois. The firm retained the name of Middle States, however, for nearly 30 years, officially changing to Central Telephone in 1967.

Although it somehow seems much longer, it was only 18 years ago, 1956, that Pekin went to the present system of dial telephones. The changes and innovations in telephone communication since that time have come fast and furious. The number of operators was reduced from 85 to 22, although today the number has climbed back to 35. The Pekin District of Central Telephone employs a total of 187.

There are over 25,000 telephones, including all business and residential extensions, in service in Pekin today. Over 95% of all cable is underground, and the small amount that is left on the high lines is being phased out. This alleviates many maintenance problems due to weather and growing trees.

Another facet of telephone service being phased out is the "party line." There still exist in Pekin about 700 two-party lines, which receive a slightly lower base rate for service. This year alone, Central Telephone in Pekin has budgeted one and one-half million dollars for new construction, mostly in the form of cable extensions and enlargements.

While the telephone has perhaps become a necessity for modern living, there are still many luxury items and additions available for use with the basic item.



Some of the care accessories phones, push button or touch call phones (which can be utilized in a number of ways, including computer hook ups), automatic dialing systems, recorded answering services, speaker phones (which enable several people in a room to participate in a conversation), and special equipment for handicapped people.

Plans for future expansion at Central Telephone, which now operates under a franchise from the City, include additional equipment for a new prefix, which will be put into operation about 1976, adding to the existing 346 and 347 exchanges.



The operators at Central Telephone Company patiently handle well over 100 calls a second.

The telephone company serves a good transition between the two major areas of concern being discussed in this section, since it can be loosely labeled as either a utility or a form of mass communication. We turn our focus now to two subjects which can only be termed forms of mass communication, or, in more current terminology, mass media, namely radio and newspapers. A third medium, television, while certainly a viable part of modern Pekin, does not directly relate to the city's history, as at present there are no television stations within the city proper, although we are served by one educational and three commercial stations, all based in or near Peoria. It

might be said, however, that one never could have been going on concerning the implementation of cable TV in Pekin, had the would-be cable been laid for education.

It is hard, though, that we want to consider now. The development of Pekin's first, and only, radio, WSIV, serves as a microcosm of the development of Pekin, deferring to, pointing to, and overcoming, study, obstacles, triumph with ultimate success.

During World War II, three Pekin radio amateurs and operators determined that the growing City of Pekin was in need of a radio station. The trio, Kenneth Pitterson, Emil Brundon, and George Cady, found their initial attempts thwarted because no building permits were being issued during the war. The year after the armistice ended the conflict in 1945, an application was made for and permit, and in January of 1946, with permit in hand, the men began work, pooling their physical, financial, and intellectual resources. The limited size piece of equipment needed, erecting a 240-foot transmitter on Route 98, and setting up broadcasting headquarters in the basement of the Arcade Building.

Easter Sunday of that same year, April 21, the station signed on with 250 watts of power. That maiden broadcast brought the voices of then Congressman Everett Dirksen and several well-known businessmen into many Pekin homes. The founders and builders had requested, and received, the call letters WSIV, standing for "We Serve the Illinois Valley." Their foresight was much greater than their original transmitter power.

The organizers served as engineers, and were never actually "on the air" themselves. But several local residents, who have gone on to distinguish themselves in similar or other areas, were. For example, Charles Danecy, current editor of the *Peoria Journal Star*, wrote and broadcast the local news. Others include Bill Houlahan and Rolfe Keith Strubhar, both of whom have enjoyed successful television careers in Peoria. And these are but a few of a much longer list.

The station, receiving much community and business support, began to prosper and expand. Soon, remote equipment made it possible to broadcast from outside the studio proper, and such programs as high school radio shows, Sunday morning church service, and Pekin Hospital reports were aired regularly.

One of these remote broadcasts that many Pekinites will remember was Frank Rosenbergs Saturday Morning Apartment Hour aired live from the Pekin Theatre. Local hospital would perform, and listeners would hope to get card during the week. Each week

ly winner was awarded a gold watch, and every 13 weeks a contest of past weekly winners was held, with the top vote-getter granted a trip to Chicago to compete in an even larger contest there. The show ran for nearly 10 years, and contestants sometimes received as many as 10,000 votes. (How they came to get that many votes could probably serve as the basis for another chapter in this book, with various schemes devised by proud parents, relatives, and friends.)

Having expanded to 1,000 watts of power after the first year, WSIV forged on, with Patterson and Udry buying out Prandoni in the early 1950's. In the early 1960's, Patterson fell victim to poor health, and he and Udry decided to sell the station. The F. F. McNaughton family, publishers of the soon-to-be-discussed *Pekin Daily Times*, were willing buyers. They moved the station to its present location of 28 South Fourth Street, beefed up the daytime AM power to 5,000 watts (making it today the most powerful daytime station within all of central Illinois) and added FM, which extended their operational hours into late evening. The AM license allowed only sunrise to sunset broadcasting.

The McNaughtons continued ownership of the station through the early 1970's when, for a number of reasons (one of which was an FCC ruling which "discouraged" ownership of two vehicles of mass communication in the same town by the same person), the station was sold to Dick Lashbrook, a native Pek-

inite who had started on radio at WSIV, gone on to work in both radio and television in West Virginia and Illinois, including WGN in Chicago, and returned "home" to take over the station he once worked for as a Diversified Occupations student at Pekin Community High School.

Lashbrook and his wife immediately put into effect many programming changes, using a format of "Beautiful Music," playing the more mellow, relaxing kind of songs. Even the commercial advertising is keyed to be a continuous part of the programming format, aimed at enticing listeners to leave the station on all day.

This summer, WSIV has gone to a full-power, stereo FM, and Lashbrook plans to continue his programming ideas. Thus, Pekin's only radio station seems to be in good hands with a bright outlook for the future.

The last form of mass communication to which attention will be given was, by far, the first and most prolific medium of news and information in the city. We allude, of course, to newspapers.

Over a dozen such ventures have come and gone in a 135-year span of time, starting with the ill-fated *Tazewell Reporter* in 1839, which survived only a few months. Then followed, in later years, *The Pekin Weekly Visitor*, established about 1845; *The Tazewell Whig* and *Pekin Commercial Advertiser*, 1848; *The Tazewell Mirror*, which in 1860 became the *Tazewell County Republican*; then, *The Pekin Post*, which finally died as the *Pekin Post-Tribune*. The *Illinois Reveille*, about 1850, was apparently the first Democratic paper to be published in Pekin.

*The Pekin Plaindealer*, established in 1856, was succeeded by *The Tazewell Register*, later changing its name to *The Pekin Times*, the only surviving Pekin publication (which will be discussed in much more detail later in this unit).

*The Tazewell Register*, *The Pekin Bulletin*, and *The Legal Tender* also were published during the middle 1880's. All of the above-mentioned papers were printed in English.

In 1852 the first German newspaper in Pekin, *Der Wachteran Illinois*, was started but ceased publication after a few months. Then, about 1875, John Hoffman established *The Pekin Freie Press*, a weekly catering to the many German residents. This was later sold to Albert Weiss, and again in 1914 to Jacob Schmidt who, with the coming of World War I, changed it to the *English Free Press*, and published it until his death in 1934. The paper died with him, leaving only the *Pekin Daily Times*, the subject we



WSIV station owner Dick Lashbrook sits amid the maze of buttons, tapes, and turntables that make up Central Illinois' most powerful daytime station.



One of the histories of the Free Press, the last one being the one that Jacob Schmidt, last publisher of the Pekin Free Press, wrote for the production of the paper on Feb. 2, 1934. After his death it was printed.

#### History recalled

That one of the first histories of the Free Press was written by the late Jacob Schmidt is a point of historical interest, particularly for the publisher of the Free Press, who has evidence that the *Times* was started in 1874, as he told in 1934. The Jacob Irwin tradition, which could easily be made the newspaper 100 years old. But it was a good point.

Irwin's role was found to be confirmed by old city directories, which indicate that he was an active journalist in the community for a number of years. A few years after its founding, ownership of the *Pekin Daily Times* was attributed to the Times Publishing Company, with B. C. Allen worth as editor and publisher; by 1893, Alfred W. Rodecker and Elvel Shurtleff were listed as proprietors and the location was designated as 405 Court Street.

The Rodecker and Shurtleff team still had possession of the newspaper when a 1905-06 directory was published. The address then was listed for the first time at 26 South Fourth Street, the old Times building, next to the alley. That segment of the current Times building now houses a seven-unit offset press. Later, Rodecker and Son (Hado) headed the publishing firm, but within a few years, the only entry for owners listed is "Times Publishing Company."

On April 15, 1915, the late Charles Utter came to the *Times* as superintendent of the physical plant. Later, he assumed the role of manager of the paper.

When the paper was sold to the McGuffin brothers, it was a small, struggling paper. The McGuffins, who were from Iowa, had been in the paper business for many years. They had been in the paper business for many years. They had been in the paper business for many years. They had been in the paper business for many years.

When the McGuffins took over the paper, they found it in a state of financial distress. They had to make many changes to get it back on its feet. They had to make many changes to get it back on its feet. They had to make many changes to get it back on its feet. They had to make many changes to get it back on its feet.

Mr. Utter, who was a local man, was brought in to help the McGuffins. He was a local man, and he knew the community. He was a local man, and he knew the community. He was a local man, and he knew the community. He was a local man, and he knew the community.

After Utter's death, the McGuffins continued to manage the paper. They managed the paper for many years. They managed the paper for many years. They managed the paper for many years. They managed the paper for many years.

During the McGuffin era, the paper was known for its quality. It was a quality paper. It was a quality paper. It was a quality paper. It was a quality paper. It was a quality paper. It was a quality paper. It was a quality paper.

Currently in existence are bound copies dating back to January 1, 1924. But leadership of the staff was difficult to document, for at times names of managing editors, sports editors and other title writers were not printed. In the first copies of 1924, Louis B. Watson was editor and manager, but later that year F. S. Austin's name appeared in the masthead. A 1925 copy has the name H. C. Funkhouser as editor and P. B. Whallon as manager, and later, F. B. Watson again.

Gilbert N. Gauderson and an associate from New Jersey bought the *Times* in 1926, but like the McGuffins before them, they soon became frightened by Peoria competition and quickly put it on the market again. Next buyer was a Hoosier Scot, F. F. McNaughton, who came to Pekin from Bicknell, Indiana, and assumed ownership on January 18, 1927. For nearly 50 years now, LaSalle County's only daily newspaper has been published by the McNaughton family.

ton family—and for many of those years, “Mr. Mac” (F. F.) has served as editor and publisher.

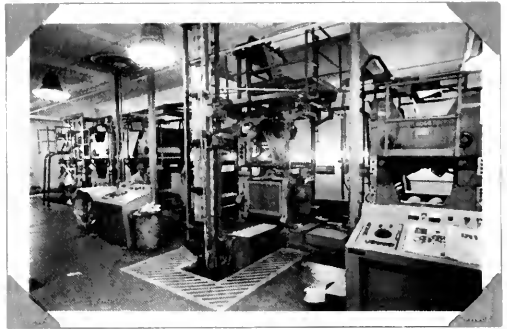
In 1941 McNaughton purchased the Zerwekh building (corner of South Fourth and Elizabeth Streets), installing a rotary press in the basement and refurbishing the main floor for business and editorial offices and the mechanical department.

Later, as his family grew, four of his five children held positions at the *Times*: Joseph E., the late John F., William Dean, and Lon Edith (Mrs. Donald Soldwedeb). Now, in 1974, F. F. McNaughton still writes his front page Editor’s Letter, which is familiar to generations of Pekinites. Ownership of the paper remains totally in the McNaughton family.



*Computers have made their presence felt everywhere in our modern society, and the Pekin Daily Times is no exception. This automated equipment makes setting the type for each paper much easier and quicker than the old melted-lead process.*

McNaughton first gave the title of managing editor to Lorne Watson, who was succeeded in turn by the late Dean W. Dittmer, Ellen Holmes (Paullin), Herb Bremmner, Ken Reiley, Bob Dey, the late John McNaughton, the late Perry Stewart, and Nate Udisky, who currently heads the editorial staff.



*Turning out 23,000 newspapers a day is no small task, but with the aid of this recently installed offset equipment, the job is no longer as formidable as it once was.*

Dean McNaughton, back from military service, filled the publisher’s shoes for a number of years, but his father has remained as editor for more than 47 years. Dean McNaughton helped build the *Times* into a prosperous organization, a vital voice in the community, before turning over the publishing duties in 1970 to R. H. “Bud” More, the first non-McNaughton to hold the publisher’s title since 1927.

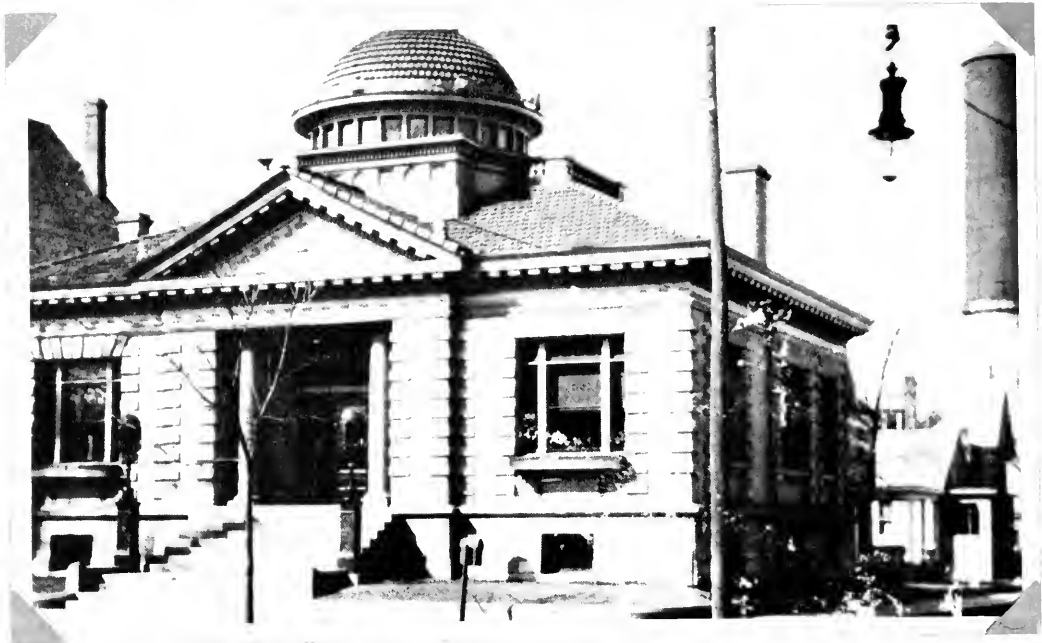
Other names important at the *Times* over the years include Caroline Kluever in the business department, Paul Ketcham in rural circulation and sports, and Roland “Hons” Weiss in production. The careers of Charles “Chuck” Layne in the advertising department and Berkley “Wick” Wickizer in the composing room also date to the early years of the McNaughton Regime. Not to be omitted are Irene Joerger Quevy, women’s editor for many years and the late Lloyd Armstrong, former sports editor. These people have witnessed any number of changes over the years, most recently, the “cold type” printing process, computer type-setting, and the new fast offset press that has made picture reproduction a thing of pride at the *Times*.

The offset press began producing the paper in the summer of 1971, and only a year later, two units were added to the original five, forcing the move of the mailing and circulation departments to a new structure across the alley. Circulation of the *Times*, from the few hundred early in the century, has grown to 23,000 as Pekin celebrates its sesquicentennial.



If you ever come home, let me  
 tell you how much I love you and  
 how much I am thinking of you. I  
 am so happy to hear from you and  
 I am so glad to hear that you are  
 well. I am so glad to hear that you  
 are happy. I am so glad to hear that  
 you are well. I am so glad to hear  
 that you are happy. I am so glad to  
 hear that you are well. I am so glad  
 to hear that you are happy. I am so  
 glad to hear that you are well. I am  
 so glad to hear that you are happy.





Two views of the Everett Public Library include the main building and the Everett Co. water tower in the background. The tower is the old Pre-Exposition building, the same one that was used for the 1909 World's Fair.



The Everett M. Dirksen Congressional Leadership Research Center is the same building that was used for the 1909 World's Fair. The building is now the Everett M. Dirksen Congressional Leadership Research Center.



MAINTENANCE BUILDING

Abel Vault & Mortuary Company



*Some glimpses of Peoria's past. Upper left, Jansen's Flour and Feed Store, upper right, Moeckel's Grocery, selling Corn Flakes at an unheard of price, lower left, the first store on Derby Street, built in the midst of cornfields by Fred Moeckel in 1915, and, lower right, a view of Court Street looking west from Schipper and Block Court and Capitol in the 1890's.*











NI-BUS

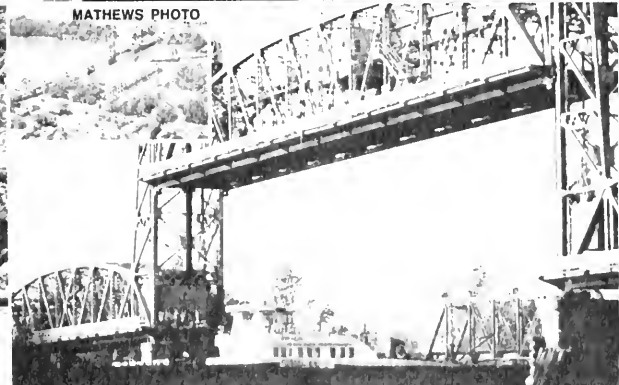
MATHEWS PHOTO



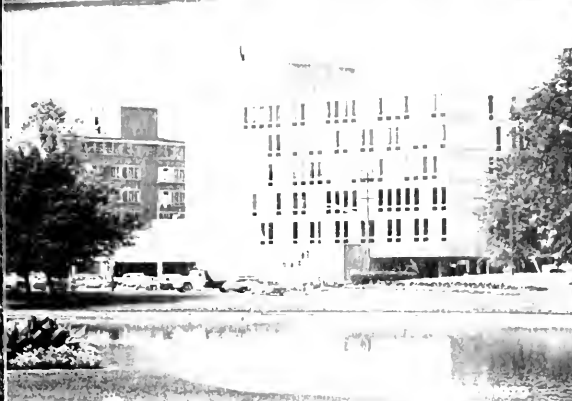
**JOHN T. McNAUGHTON**  
**SECRETARY OF THE NAVY**  
 1921 - 1967



**PARK AVENUE OF FLAGS**

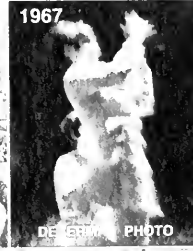
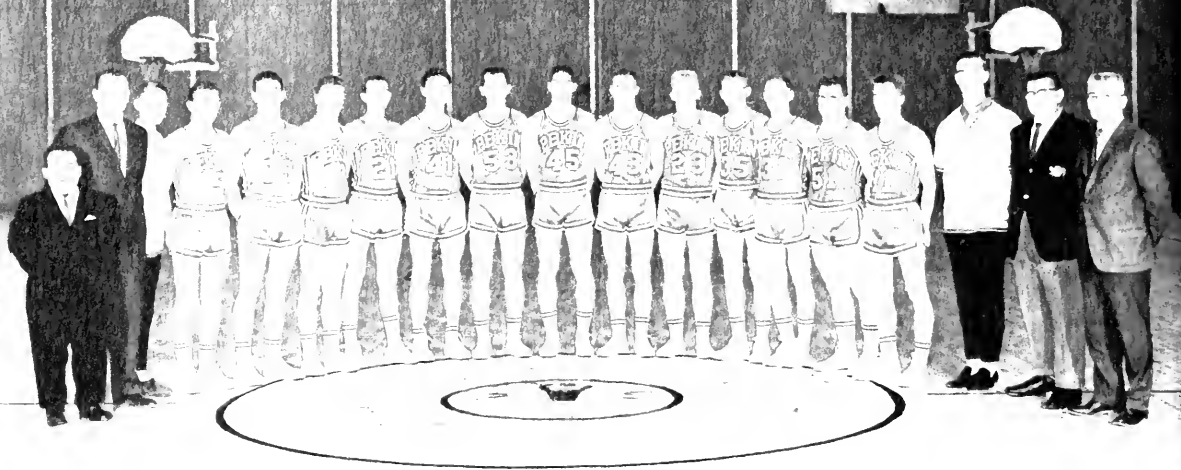


MATHEWS PHOTO



**MEMBERS OF THE COMMITTEE TO RIGHT**  
**WILLIAM D. VANCE**  
**HENRY C. VAN DYKE**  
**WILLARD E. BENTLEY**  
**FRANCIS E. ORRILL**

1964 STATE BASKETBALL CHAMPIONS • P.C.H.S.



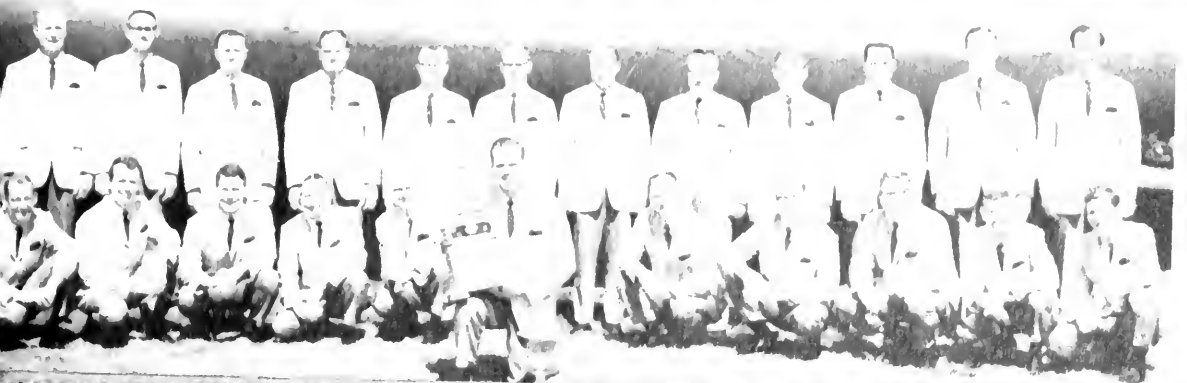
1967 STATE BASKETBALL CHAMPIONS • P.C.H.S.

DEVERMAN PHOTO

PEKIN HOBO BAND • AUG 28. 1930  
ORIGINAL PAINTING BY E W McDANIELS



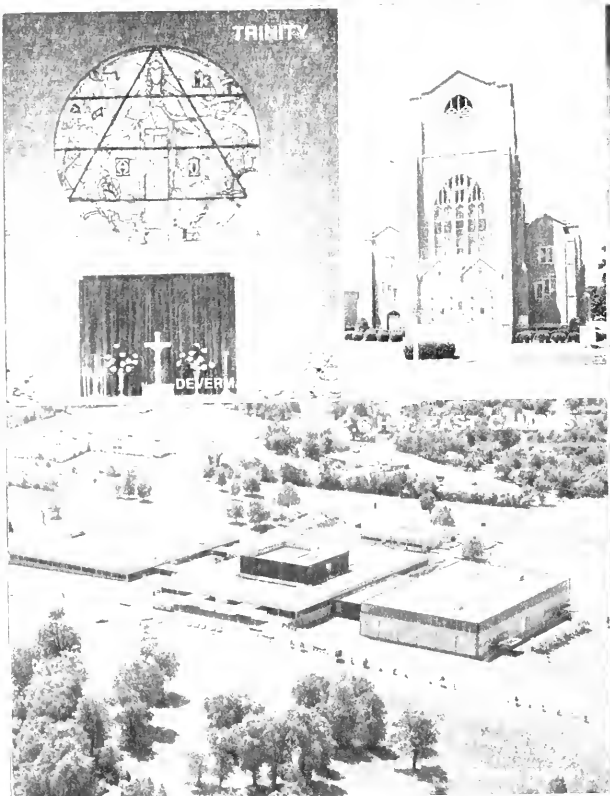
PEKIN BARBERSHOP CHORUS • S.P.E.B.S.Q.S.A.  
INTERNATIONAL CHAMPIONS 1952 - 1963 - 1968



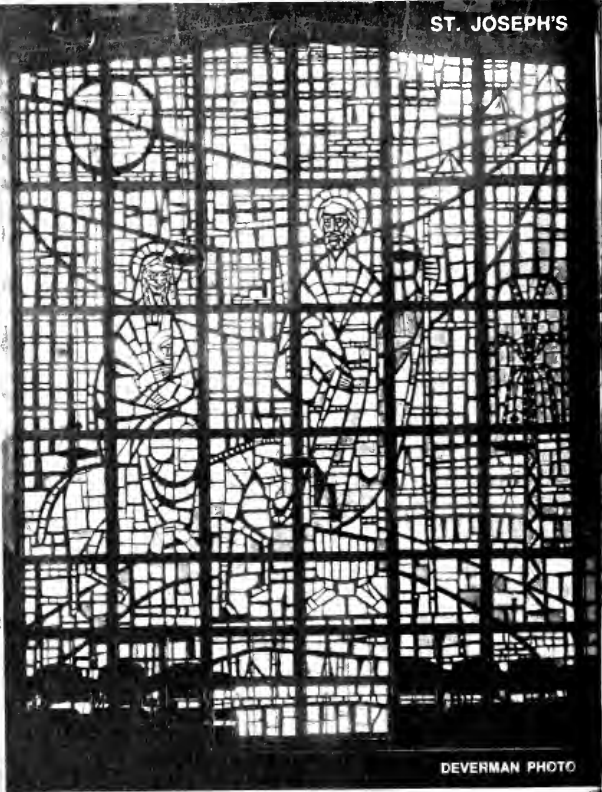


TRINITY

ST. JOSEPH'S



PEKIN ARENA



DEVERMAN PHOTO



MINERAL SPRINGS POOL



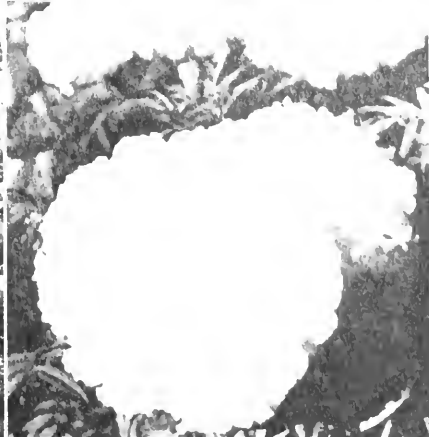
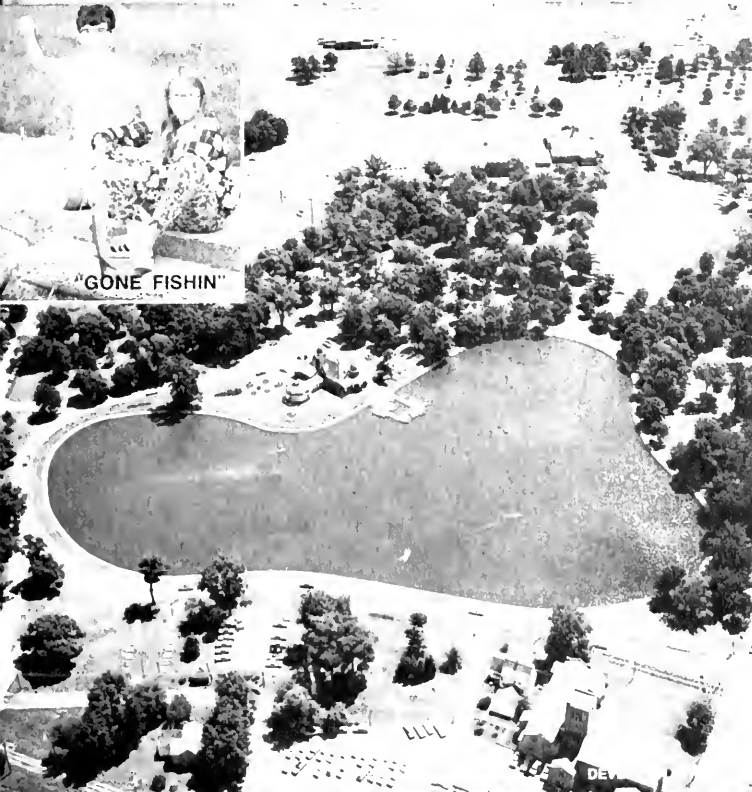
PEKIN STARS HOCKEY TEAM

DEVERMAN PHOTO

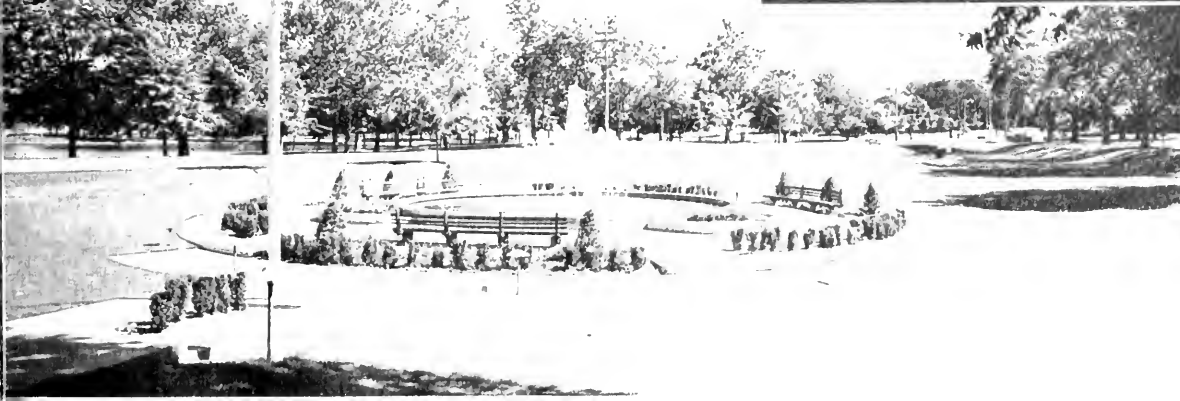
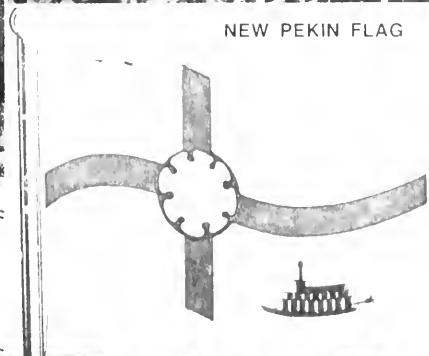


COURSE

DEVERMAN PHOTO

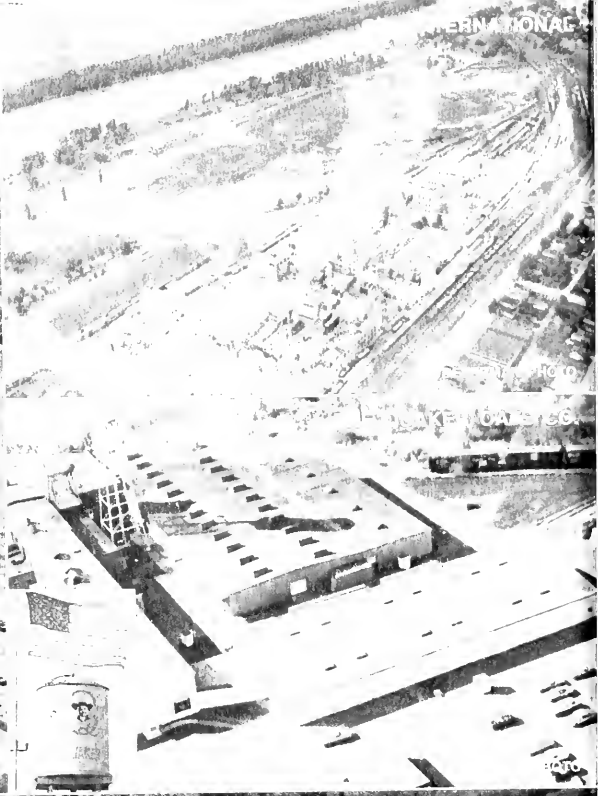


NEW PEKIN FLAG

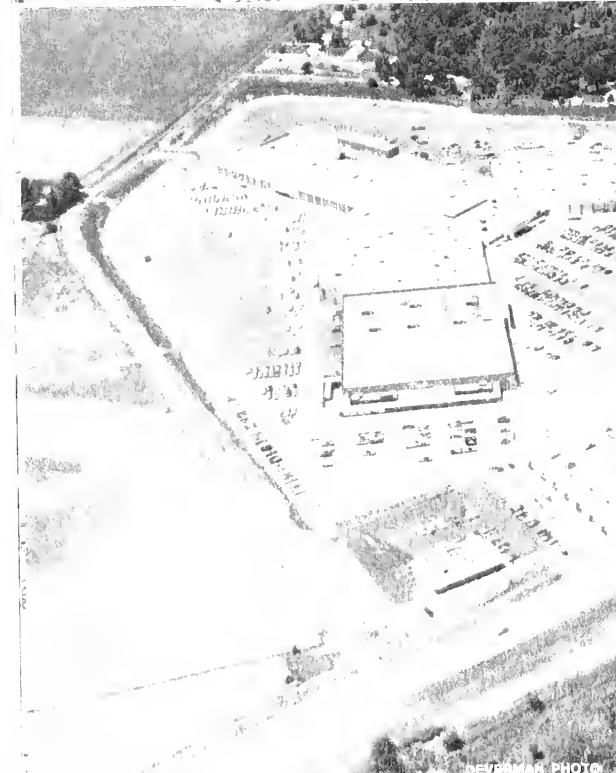




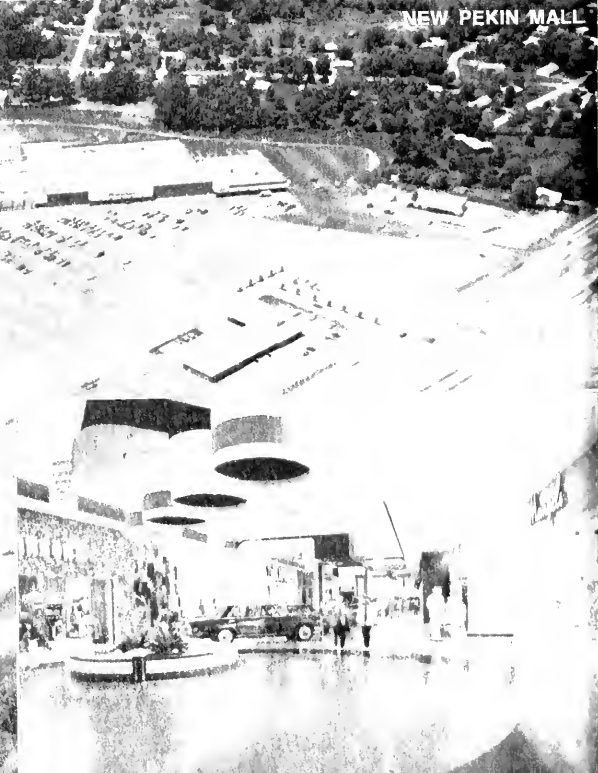
NEWMAN PHOTO



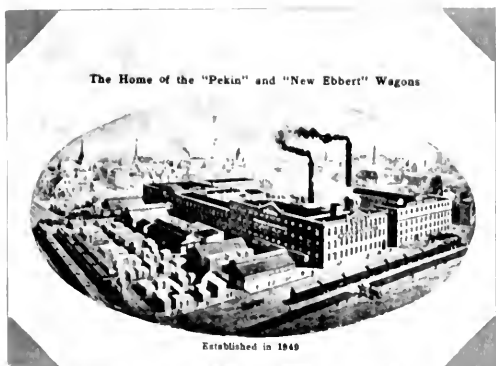
NEW PEKIN MALL



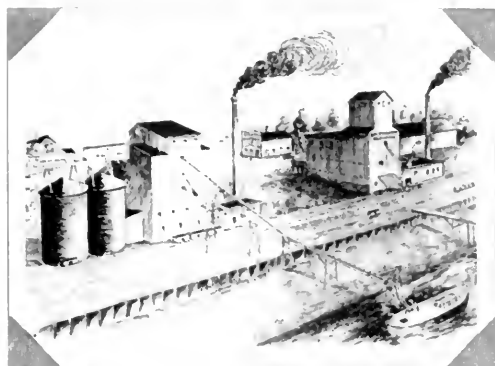
NEWMAN PHOTO







Some glimpse into Pekin industrial past above left the thriving T. San Wagner Works and right view of the city and river from the East Bluff



Above left is an old "Sprinkling Water" wagon from the East Bluff, it plays a role in the history of the city



Above right is a group of men, likely workers, standing in front of the factory building



Today's big parking lot problem is not the amount of parking places but the cost. But no matter where you go, parking is a pain. In the city of Chicago, parking costs 5¢ per hour, 10¢ per 2 hours or 25¢ per 8 hours for the first day.





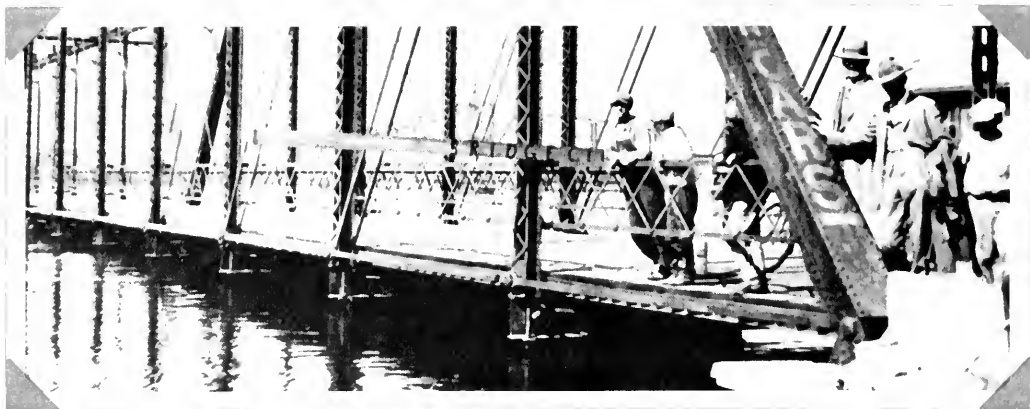
*As the bridge is built, the steel framework is visible.*



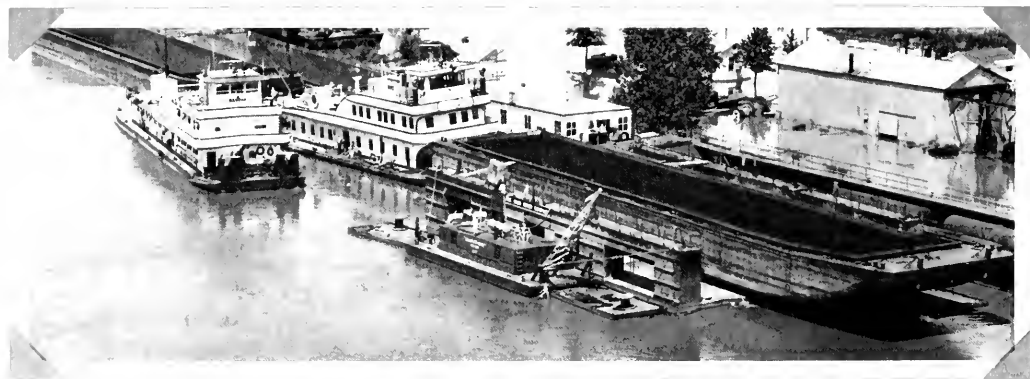
*This once magnificent bridge is now a ruin. It is no longer of service, but it is still a sight to behold.*



*The steel framework of the bridge is visible. The workers are visible on the bridge.*



*High water is nothing new to Pekin. The shot above was taken in the 1920s — note the old steel bridge, and the wooden planks. Below, the 1943 high water (highest river stage ever recorded in Pekin) sent these workers floating across submerged railroad tracks.*



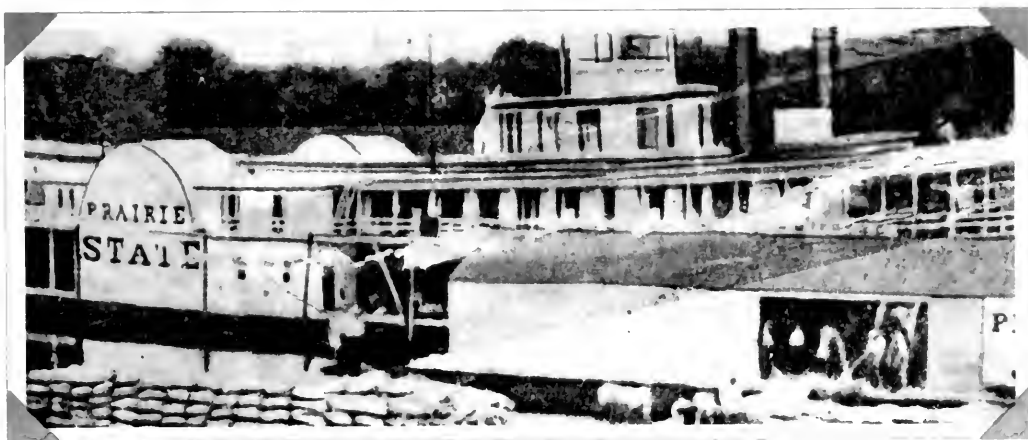
# 7

## Catastrophies

Just as every community has its great leaps forward, it must also suffer some steps backward, often caused by circumstances beyond any one person's or group's control. Fortunately, Pekin has not experienced an overwhelming number of progress-retarding catastrophies over the years, but it has known its share. Perhaps because time seems almost to stop in moments of great personal tragedy, they often become reference points from which future time is marked, such as "the year after the house burned" or "the day

Grandpa died." In this chapter we have tried to record events that became historical reference points for the whole city: the sinking of the *Columbia*, the Distillery fire, the '43 flood, to mention just a few; and we are including such man-made catastrophies as the World Wars and the Korean and Vietnam conflicts.

Because of its location, Pekin has inevitably experienced a number of river disasters. The first of these to have a substantial impact on the community was the explosion of the river steamer, *Prairie State*.



*Prairie State* burning on the Illinois River, 1943

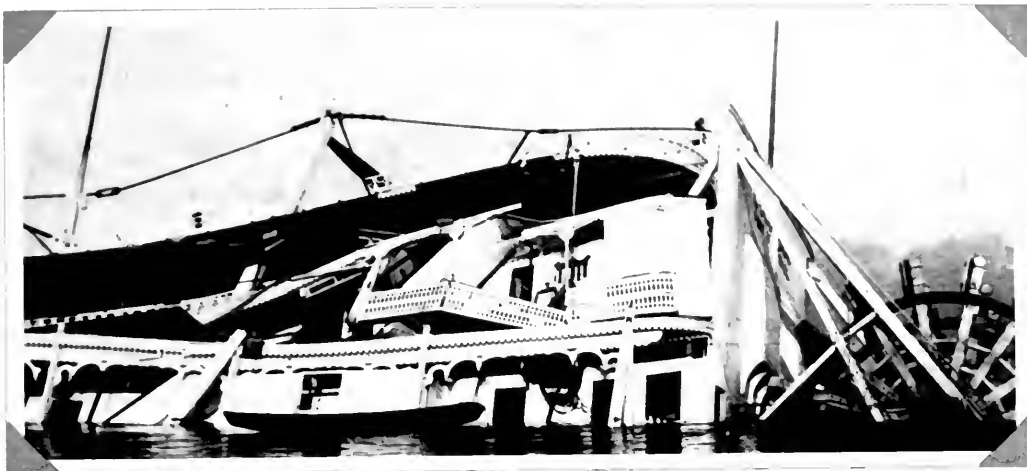
On the morning of April 16, 1852, the steamers *Prairie State* and *Avalanche*, both southward bound, landed almost simultaneously at the Pekin wharf. The *Prairie State* pulled out from the landing ahead of her competitor, and had reached a point nearly opposite "gas house hill" (in the area of 100 Fayette Street) when her boilers exploded with terrific force. It was the "church going hour," but large numbers of worshippers postponed their religious observances and rallied to the rescue. The *Avalanche* steamed down to the wreck and towed what was left of the beautiful *Prairie State* back to the Pekin wharf. The steamer had been crowded with passengers, many of whose bodies were never recovered, but those that were found were placed side by side under the walnut and oak trees along the riverbank.

Every available house in town became a temporary hospital in which to alleviate the suffering of scalded and maimed passengers. A number of the injured liked Pekin so well that they forgot about their former destinations and remained here. One such traveler was James Sallee, who had been bound for Texas, but instead settled here and later married a Pekin girl. (He was the grandfather of Paul Sallee, well-known area entertainer.) Thus, Pekin's population was increased in a unique way, as a number of new citizens literally blew into town.

Forty years passed before a similar calamity occurred on July 12, 1892. This time, the *Frankie Folsom*, an excursion steamer, was transporting Pekin residents back to town after they had attended a performance of *Pompeii* in Peoria. Having left the Peoria dock at about 19:30, the boat capsized when a sudden



This picture of the magnificent *Columbia* at the dock before its disastrous voyage leaves little reason to wonder why it was one of the most popular excursion steamers on the river.



*It's hard to believe that this is the same vessel that rode the waves so peacefully moments before.*

storm assaulted it in the middle of Lake Peoria. At the advent of the storm, a party of several persons had rushed into the cabin, thus hindering their chances of escape once the boat began to sink. Many passengers did get off, though, and they clung to the hull of the overturned vessel until rescuers summoned by the distress call of the nearby *Longfellow* arrived to assist them. Although most of the people aboard were rescued, 11 did perish in the accident.

In terms of human lives lost, though, the most tragic river mishap in Pekin's history occurred on July 5, 1918, when the excursion steamer *Columbia* sank on the Illinois, four miles north of Pekin. What was to be termed at the time the most tragic catastrophe in the history of inland water navigation in the entire United States, began innocently enough as the "deluxe" event of the year of the Pekin South Side Social Club.

The ill-fated voyage began from Kingston Mines at 7:30, and after a brief stopover to pick up passengers in Pekin at 8:15, the *Columbia* proceeded upstream carrying 496 people to Al Fresco Park, a Peoria amusement area often visited by similar excursions.

Needless to say, a holiday atmosphere prevailed, and it continued on the return trip as passengers danced to a live orchestra. Then, at midnight when the revelry was at its height, the boat struck a submerged stump hidden by heavy fog, ripping a gaping hole eleven feet long and two feet wide in the hull of the steamer. Some flickering lights were thrown

to the floor or washed overboard, and many fell helplessly to drown. Immediately, lifeboats and lifebelts were cut down and put to use, but the sheer numbers of the passengers made the task of abandoning the boat prohibitive.

The first non-passengers on the scene were John Chance and a companion, who saw the accident from a cabin on the Wesley side of the river and hastened to the rescue in a rowboat. They worked alone until relieved by motorboats summoned to the wreck by appeals for help flashed from Wesley City to Peoria. The Peoria and Pekin Union Railroad dispatcher cleared the tracks for an eight-coach train to haul survivors from the scene, all of whom were off the boat by 2:30 on Saturday morning (July 6). The injured were taken to both Pekin and Peoria hospitals.

The home guard, along with other agencies, assumed the responsibility for recovery, identification and burial operations. As identification was made, bodies were tagged and removed to the morgue. A hastily converted vacant Pekin foreman's home made room for non-victims. An urgent call was put out to all surrounding areas for undertakers to care for the bodies.

After four days (during which rescuers had little respite), all the bodies except that of a child found to be recovered, and the steel-hulled towboat was raised from the bottom. Of the 500 bodies sent to Pekin,

Peoria, Chicago, and other cities.

bon, sometimes tied around a small bouquet, on the front door of a home in which someone had died. After the *Columbia* tragedy some homes on Pekin's South side had as many as two or three of these "crepes" suspended on their doors. Fortunately, the *Columbia* sinking was the last large scale river disaster in terms of lives lost, but even today the river claims a number of lives every year in swimming or boating accidents.

The river presents a continuing menace to property as springtime floodwaters threaten both residences and businesses, as well as riverbottom acreage. Flooding is not the problem it was once, since many of the residences along the river threatened annually by rising waters have been torn down, and the highwater system has been installed, reducing the danger to industry and farmlands. Nevertheless, sandbagging is still necessary in some areas nearly every spring.

Throughout the years, there have been a number of exceptionally high water levels. A rampaging Illinois River surged to its highest level in Pekin's history in 1943, cresting at 455.3 feet (the accompanying chart explains how to interpret the measurement) on May 24 in a flood which threatened most of the industrial area and drove many families from their homes. Local workers battled around the clock for days, strengthening levees and erecting sandbag barriers in an attempt to reduce damage at Corn Products and American Distilling.

#### ILLINOIS RIVER LEVELS AT PEKIN

482.0	First floor level of Court House
455.3	May 24, 1943
453.6	June, 1844
453.0	May, 1970
452.6	May, 1933
452.58	October, 1926
451.11	March, 1922

On numerous different occasions the river has crested at various levels between these two points.

445.0	March, 1939
430.0	Low water level established by Army Corps of Engineers (channel would be approximately 11 feet deep)
0	Sea level



*This picture was taken looking west from Franklin School during the 1943 flood*





*This is what one saw looking west at the foot of Charlotte Street in 1945.*

On Saturday, the 23rd, Corn Products had closed down production, and American Distilling had halted its bottling operation and exhausted its grain supply, although alcohol production continued. Even after the water began to recede very slowly, the Distillery had to truck corn across Corn Products property in order to maintain operations, for the railroad tracks near the plant were covered with five feet of water. Whiskey barrels bobbed about the grounds, nudging the fence which prevented them from joining the debris being swept downriver, and workers had to go to and from the plant by boat.

Manholes in the North Second Street area had to be sandbagged to keep water from backing up from the river. Efforts were only partly successful because backing water plagued the river itself, and the pressure of the flooded Mississippi and Missouri Rivers kept the Illinois high for many days.

In the aftermath of the flood (which struck all along the river leaving 115,000 homeless in six Central-Plains states), then-Senator Marty Lohmann of Pekin sponsored a \$1.5 million flood relief bill, which was rushed through the State Legislature to match the \$750,000 of Federal funds allocated to Illinois. Thousands of newly-planted acres were washed out, but with loans from the relief funds and the motto "It takes food to win the war" (World War II was the big news of the day), farmers zealously replanted.

The river certainly has not been the only threat to the city's growth and prosperity; fire has also taken its toll on Pekin residences, churches, businesses, and industry. In the city's early days, fires were not an im-

probable occurrence, but the conflagration that destroyed a block of Court Street in 1860 was of awesome magnitude even for that era.

The first major disaster to strike Pekin after the city's incorporation was the fire that broke out in the E. Gardening grocery store on downtown Court Street, March 22, 1860. The wooden frame buildings nearby soon caught fire, and the blaze swept unchecked down Court, razing the entire block on both sides of the street from Third to Capitol, as well as some residences on Elizabeth, south of Third Street.

The city's fire equipment apparently was still limited to the single fire ladder purchased by John Gridley when he was County Clerk, a decade preceding the fire. Therefore, it isn't too difficult to comprehend that 31 buildings were destroyed in fairly short order, and \$150,000 worth of property demolished—damage that would exceed ten times that amount today.

The most substantial loss of \$15,000 in property and stock was suffered by Rupert and Vincent De Goods and Groceries. Next came Dr. D. Hoffman, whose new, \$12,000, two-story, iron-front brick building was a total loss. Much of the destroyed property was rebuilt with a spirit exemplified by the determined effort of John McDonald, at that time the publisher of the *Tazewell Register*. In spite of a \$5,000 loss, including his printing press and other equipment, he put out a small, one-page paper the next day, and two weeks thereafter. Less than one month later, he had replaced both building and equipment, and resumed publication on the same site as before the fire.

Much of the burned-out property was replaced in substantial brick, beautifying the downtown area considerably. The fire also renewed interest in organizing city fire-protection agencies, although whether those agencies' vigor worked for the community's advantage will have to be determined when the reader comes to the government section.

In the "Gay Nineties" spectacular fires razed Shipper and Block Co., *Pekin Daily Times*, Woodward Hotel, Hamburg Distillery, and Enterprise Distillery (twice). The high school was also destroyed by fire, and for six months classes were held in church basements and any other available space in town. But it wasn't until 1924 that a conflagration caused devastation comparable to that of the fire of 1860. This time the toll was exacted in human lives as well as property.

At about 3:30 a.m., January 3, 1924, third-shift workers at the Pekin Corn Products plant heard an explosion, immediately following which, observers reported, the starch-packing portion of the plant seemed to rise from its foundation. Then a giant tongue of flame shot into the air, a second explosion was heard, and the entire structure toppled, erupting into a living inferno for the men inside, many of whom were literally incinerated as the one million pounds of starch stored in the building started to burn. Later, victims found in the rubble of the building had to be identified by their brass identification checks, and in some cases, watches and teeth.

The first-aid, personnel, and paymaster's offices were in the immediate vicinity, and by the time Paymaster Charles Hough arrived (he had run all the way from his home to the plant, a distance of several blocks), victims lined the floors of the three offices. Immediately a bucket brigade was formed from the oil house (where plant-refined corn oil was stored), and the buckets of oil were thrown on the sufferers in an action which was credited with saving many of their lives.

As soon as the plant alarm whistle pinpointed the location of the explosion which many residents had already heard, the community responded. The Salvation Army was on hand almost at once, setting up a first-aid tent, aiding in rescue operations, and feeding rescuers and victims alike. Captain and Mrs. Tieman were in charge, and Mrs. Tieman seems to have been the "Florence Nightingale" of the disaster, for nearly every newspaper account praises her tireless efforts in tending to the injured. Allegedly, the Pekin Kn Knix Klam was also on hand. Thirty-six of its members divided into three shifts to aid in the relief, providing food for the Salvation Army tent; trucks and drivers

for transporting both men and materials; and aid to bereaved families in the form of food, fuel, and clothing.

In the general confusion immediately after the explosion, many were reported missing or dead who had simply neglected to check out when they went home for the day, so a house-to-house check was initiated to establish precisely who needed to be accounted for. There was no central location to call for information, and soon the telephone company was swamped. Extra help was called in to handle the more than 50,000 calls in a 24-hour period (quite a strain for the equipment of that time, although today the switchboard routinely handles well over 133,000 calls daily).

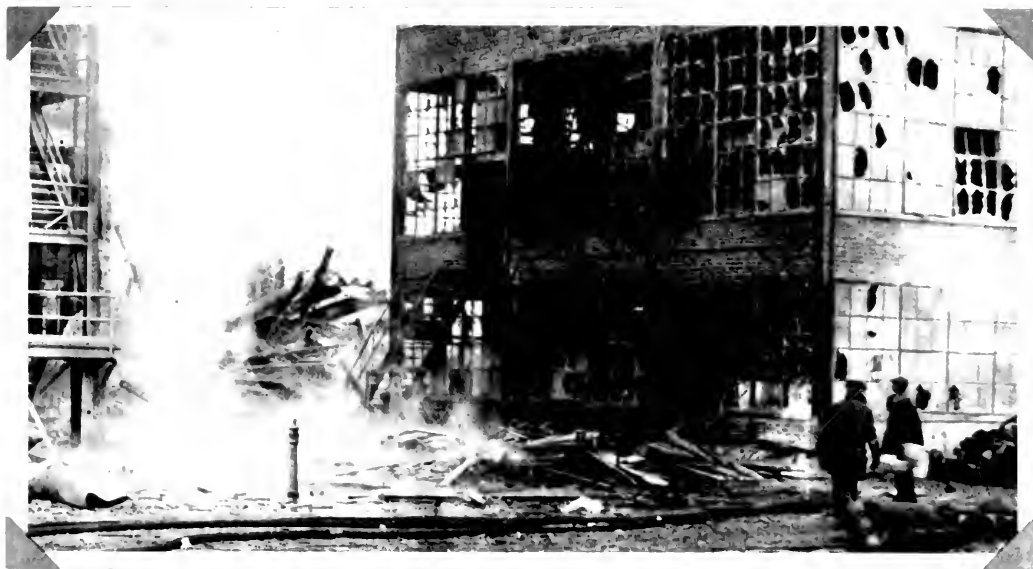
The body of Otto Lohmes was the first to be recovered from the ruins of the starch-packing plant; the number of deceased pulled out after him, plus the number who died later in the hospitals (some had to be taken to Peoria) totaled 42. Twenty-two additional victims were maimed by injuries sustained in the tragedy. Of the number killed, ten were unidentifiable, and unsuccessful efforts to recover the last body led to the belief that it was cremated in the internal wreckage.

Mass funerals were held on two successive days at the Pekin High School, the first for the identified dead, the second for the unidentifiable. A memorial plot for the ten unidentifiable and the one unrecovered body is located at Lakeside Cemetery.

Ultimately, the state fire marshal and a government engineer decided that the explosion probably occurred when sparks from an overheated bearing in a conveyor box ignited starch dust on the floor of the building. The starch plant and an unused building connected to it were completely destroyed. A more substantial structure located nearby remained standing, but its windows were blown out and machinery torn loose. (Some several-hundred-pound kiln doors were blown as far as 30 feet.)

The plant was closed down for about ten days until a temporary starch-packing unit could be constructed. This was replaced by a modern steel and concrete building in which all spills are carried back into the hopper by conveyor, and the walls are hosed down twice a day to prevent dust from accumulating.

During the early morning hours of November 1 of that same year, fire again struck a Pekin industry. At 11:00 a.m., firemen were still battling the fire which destroyed the Hummer Saddlery, causing an estimated \$300,000 damage. Chief Jaeckel (city fire chief for half a century) and other heroic firemen saved \$100,000 worth of finished stock, but even though all the city's fire-fighting equipment was used and five





Explosion of the ship "Albatross" during the attack on Pearl Harbor, December 7, 1941.

streams of water were continuously poured onto the building, the brick walls collapsed and the structure was a total loss. Again the Ku Klux Klan offered assistance, including the use of the "Klavern" on First Street (the old Pekin Roller Mills Building).

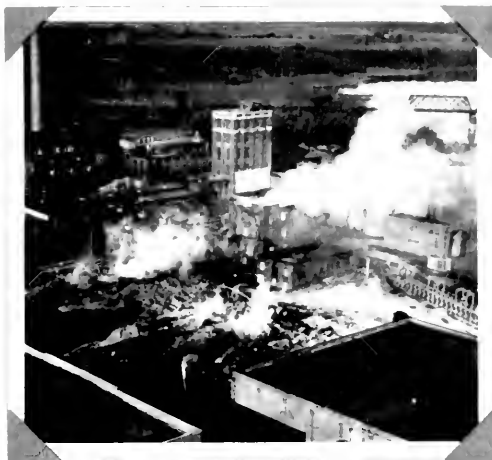
Speculation at the time was that the "Big Four" train, carrying 20 coaches of students to Champaign for an Iowa-Illinois football game, passed behind the building (located on the present site of the Cohen-Kroger complex at Eleventh and Margaret) at about 3:30 a.m. Sparks from the smokestack of the steam engine were believed to have ignited the dry leaves which had been accumulating on the roof and in the gutters of the building all fall.

River Road was again visited by a major conflagration at 2:00 a.m. on August 4, 1954, when lightning struck one of the older rack warehouses at the American Distilling plant, initiating a roaring fire. The burning building ignited the warehouse next to it, and firemen from 17 communities, along with hundreds of volunteers, battled the flames until the fire seemed to be under control at 7 a.m. The two buildings smoldered throughout the afternoon, and a few firemen remained until 3 p.m., dousing the ruins with water.

Then, at 7 p.m., firemen were called back to investigate smoke coming from a larger building facing the two that had already burned, but the smoke was so intense that they were forced to retreat. What started this second fire was never really determined; apparently, flames from the other buildings somehow traveled through some underground connections, igniting the inside of the third structure and giving the fire a considerable head start before it was discovered.

Eleven companies had returned to combat the new blaze when the building exploded at about 10:30 p.m., burying some of the firefighters in the rubble. Six men were killed and 38 injured before the fire could be brought under control, yet a nearby storage building containing 300,000 gallons of highly explosive, 190-proof alcohol remained untouched. Although chances of its exploding were not great, had it done so, the entire plant would probably have been lost.

Included in the \$5 million damage assessment was the loss of 110,000 barrels of whiskey, about 25% of the plant's inventory. Within 24 hours after news of the disaster was out, several different distillers had contacted company president, Russel R. Brown, to offer supplies necessary to keep the Distillery operating. Inventory was thin for the next four years (whiskey must be allowed an aging period), but with out-side supplementation to the remaining stock, plus the



*The rubble pictured here is all that remained of three warehouses of the American Distilling Company after they were razed in a \$5 million fire that claimed the lives of 38 men.*

fact that the plant managed to resume bottling and shipping operations within three days after the disaster, possible future repercussions of the fire were well under control.

It should be noted that these industrial tragedies were primarily caused by freak accidents, but in an attempt to reduce them to a minimum, lawmakers, labor and management, and the general public have begun to act to promote industrial safety. The federal "Occupational Safety and Health Act of 1970" (OSHA) resulted from this concern and is designed to assure safe and healthful working conditions for laborers, authorize enforcement of certain health standards, encourage efforts to provide safe working conditions, and provide for research and education in the field of occupational safety and health. Local industries, influenced by this and other legislation to reassess the potentially hazardous aspects of industrial production, have become increasingly concerned with maintaining a high level of plant safety.

Although the fire that destroyed the Circle Inn at the corner of Second and Derby Streets on October 29, 1956, seems minor in comparison to the industrial disasters, its story had an ironic twist. On the very evening of the conflagration that claimed two lives, a delegation of concerned residents was informing the City Council that they feared there was a fire-bomb on the loose, and final evidence indicated that the Circle Inn fire was the work of an arsonist.

One of the more extensive fires to strike a single Pekin business occurred at 1:20 a.m., September 15, 1958, and completely destroyed both the building and contents of the Cohen Furniture Store (then located at 424 Court). The only things to escape incineration were the records of the business, which were recovered intact from the fireproof, waterproof safe. During the course of the blaze, Cohen's west wall collapsed, damaging the neighboring Siebert Electric Company, and over 800,000 gallons of water were poured onto the two buildings. In the aftermath of the fire, Cohen's relocated "temporarily" at the corner of Eleventh and Margaret—where it remains to this day, having moved one building to the east in recent years to allow the Kroger and Super-X chains to enter the shopping complex.

In June of 1965, Pekin's downtown business section was dealt a double blow. On Monday, June 28, firemen were called to the 300 block of Court Street where a blaze which started in Hecht's Bonny Shop (a women's clothiers) ultimately caused \$60,000 damage, including smoke damage to the Ben Franklin store on the west and Russ Strauman's Outfitter to Men and Boys and the Pekin Furniture Mart on the east. No sooner had the Hecht's blaze been brought under control than a fire broke out in the lower 200 block of Court.

Described at the time by Mayor William Waldmire as "one of the greatest fires in Pekin's history," this blaze was more difficult to contain than its immediate predecessor, and firemen ultimately had to call for outside help (which came from Creve Coeur, East Peoria, North Pekin, Morton, and Peoria). Damage was estimated at well over \$100,000, not taking into account any inventory destroyed.

Perhaps started by an explosion in the Lazewell Paper and Supply Co., the conflagration began shortly before 5:30 p.m. Fed by a brisk wind from the southwest, the flames spread rapidly eastward into adjoining structures, despite firemen's efforts to isolate the blaze. The roof covering the six structures involved collapsed at the height of the fire around midnight, but although weakened by the heat, the walls remained standing. During the fire, firemen pumped 5,500 gallons of water per minute onto the flames, compared to a total of 6,200 gallons per minute being used in the city. Reportedly, some local industries shut down their operations which used city water in order to give the firefighters more pressure, until the fire was brought under control around 2 a.m.

Some of the buildings destroyed had been constructed before the turn of the century, resulting in an historic as well as an economic loss to the city.

Structures razed or damaged by the blaze housed Lazewell Paper and Supply Co., Windsor Cab Company, and Pekin Plumbing Co. Two vacant buildings were also in the heavily damaged area, and buildings owned by Rose Dentino and Harry Brosmer, standing on either side of the burned-out area, suffered smoke damage.

The south side of the 300 block of Court was again gutted by fire on May 29, 1971. \$600,000 damage was sustained and seven buildings damaged in the blaze, begun by an explosion which blew out the front of a structure that housed Gluba Jewelry, Dean's Barber-shop, Pekin Floor Covering, and Western Auto (which suffered the most substantial loss). Another Pekin landmark was destroyed when the Gehrig Cigar Store succumbed to the flames, a loss especially lamented by cigar and pipe lovers throughout the city, as the home of one of their favorite suppliers was never rebuilt. Shamrock Rest, the Empire Buffet, and Borden's were also involved.

Today we often take for granted the "wonder drugs" which medical scientists discovered not so very long ago, and the epidemics discussed in the Overview seem to be almost ancient history. Yet diseases ravaged Pekin after the turn of the century, too. The first major epidemic of the 1900's occurred over a period of several months in 1918, when many Pekin residents were stricken with influenza. Schools and churches were closed, and businesses locked their front doors, nailed boards across the back doors, and required customers to come into the alleys to pick up their purchases over the boards without entering the buildings.

Hospital space was at a premium, and the Lounee home, a large residence at the corner of Eighth and Park (many will remember it as Floy's Nursing Home), was temporarily converted to a hospital to care for the ever-growing numbers stricken. There were far too few doctors on hand to meet the needs of the community, and, in many cases, little they could do anyway, as the disease claimed its victims with incredible speed. One long-time Pekinite recalls that a neighbor brought her some supper one evening to give her a moment's respite from caring for her sick daughters. The next morning she asked the neighbor's son why he was "all dressed up," to which he replied that his mother had taken ill and died in the night, and he was on his way to her funeral. Other victims of the disease were also buried quickly, in an attempt to retard the spread of the contagion.

Readers may recall that this was also the year in which the *Columbia* sank and hundreds of Pekin boys were still being called away to World War I, so the

city spent much of 1918 swathed in black.

As recently as the late forties, the city health officer was still quarantining houses for whooping cough and scarlet fever, but the next major scare came with polio in the early 1950's. Polio had reached near epidemic proportions in many parts of the nation, and a polio "season" drew near; many parents kept their children at home to avoid contagion. As a result, young people were conspicuously absent from Pekin's parks and theaters during the spring and summer months of those years.

Some Pekin youngsters and young adults were stricken, but many recovered completely. Others were left with residual paralysis, and some had to be taken to Peoria, where an iron lung was available, for the disease often affected the respiratory system. Some Pekinites undoubtedly died, but records to confirm such information are not readily available.

When the Salk vaccine was released for general use in the early '60's, local doctors and nurses worked together to set up mass immunization clinics and volunteered their time to administer the vaccine. The school nurses were especially instrumental in organizing these clinics, which were held in the city schools. The Salk immunization came in three stages, but after the second series of shots had been given, an Eastern laboratory accidentally released some bad vaccine, from which some people actually got polio, and in the ensuing scare a mass clinic for the third series was never held.

In the "Sabin Oral Sunday" SOS clinics, the lay-cces stepped forward to aid in organization, and pharmacists and nurses again donated their time. Large numbers of Pekinites came to the High School Library (West Campus) to receive the vaccine, which was either dropped on their tongues or given them on a sugar cube. Thanks to these clinics and similar efforts throughout the nation, the long fight against polio was successfully terminated—and the disease is not the threat to contemporary children that it was to their parents.

Today we even vaccinate children against the so-called "childhood diseases" which every youngster was expected to have as a matter of course only a few years ago. The last mass immunization clinic conducted in Pekin was directed toward one of these diseases—Rubella (measles)—which was discovered to cause birth defects when it was contracted by pregnant women. The vaccination was given to the 4 to 10 age group, though, since they most often contracted measles, and hence were most responsible for the spread of the disease. Sponsored by the March of Dimes, which had switched its area of concern to

both fetal and infant deaths, was an "Stillborn Week" the last week in April of 1966. On April 20, 1966, the first of the "Stillborn Week" clinics was held in the city of Pekin. It was a clinic to test for rubella infection in pregnant women before the fetus is born, though the purpose was an attempt to reduce epidemic stillbirths of the past.

As of these writing the ethnophiles did not conduct enough research to have been cited some of the town's most interesting customs. The one exception is the boy's initiation "dance" held in the fall, which is held when necessary, but not frequently enough. The subject was in which Pekinites were a great deal interested, as discussed in the Overview. The boy's initiation, which the Potters (Potters), Shaubena, asked his life to give contentment. Told by Black Hawk: "If the Potters (Potters) nation will rise, our warriors will number as the trees of the forest," Shaubena replied, "If so, you will find that the white man's warriors number as the leaves on the tree of the forest." Because of this during statement and Shaubena's accompanying action, the Indian was came no more than 50 miles to Pekin, and Shaubena was limited by warlike Indians for the rest of his life. Eventually his son was caught and murdered because his father was a friend to the whites.

No Shaubena appeared on the national scene to avert the Civil War, and Lawrence County responded to President Lincoln's call for volunteers with a eagerness unparalleled before or since. 5,000 of the county's finest men followed the Colors into battle in the Union Army, a shockingly high number of soldiers in proportion to the population at that time, and a considerably higher percentage than served even in World War II. Of that number, hundred were Pekinites, and at least two companies were actually formed directly at Pekin. One of these was a group of 100 men who called themselves the "Pekin Invincible." Three of the Pekin enlistees rose through the rank to become Brigadier Generals. They were Josiah Sheets of the 8th Illinois Infantry, Co. E, who rose from the rank of First Lieutenant Edwin S. McCook, 31st Illinois Infantry, Co. I, who rose from the rank of Captain, and Charles Turner, a founder of the soon to be disbanded Union League 105th Illinois Infantry, who rose from Lieutenant Colonel.

Pekinites were scattered through more than 20 regiments of Illinois volunteers, serving for the most part under General Grant, Sheridan, and Sherman. They marched southward from Cairo to the Gulf of Mexico, and onward, with Sherman, to the sea. The men serving under Grant suffered from a number of hardships, as well as from confrontation with the

enemy, as a result of their long confinement on transports during the Mississippi River campaign, by which Grant first cut the Confederacy in two.

The city acted quickly to back its soldiers as they marched to war, appropriating the sum of \$30,000 for the volunteers and \$1000 for assistance to the families they left behind. Within ten days of the firing on Fort Sumter (April 12, 1861), companies were organized, drilled, and ready to go.

Perhaps because so many Union enthusiasts left with the Army, the secessionist element seemed to have the upper hand here at home during much of the Civil War. The "Knights of the Golden Circle," an outright secessionist organization, met openly, and members were bold in their support of the rebel cause; Union supporters often spoke in whispers on the city's streets because they were so wary of the power of the Southern sympathizers.

Deciding that such a situation was intolerable, 11 men gathered secretly on June 25, 1862, at 331 Court Street to organize a pro-Union campaign at home. The organization was called the Union League, and the philosophy behind it inspired similar meetings, first in Bloomington, then in Chicago, and soon throughout the entire North, as the Union League became a powerful instrument for propaganda and finance in support of the Union cause. Even today the League persists in the larger cities, such as Chicago, New York, and Boston, although these are basically exclusive social organizations with strong Republican political sympathies.

With the advent of the Union League, Northern sympathizers were no longer intimidated by their secessionist neighbors, and a number of methods were employed to aid the Union cause. A soldiers' aid society was organized, and on August 6, 1864, met to plan a County Sanitary Fair, on the order of similar events being held throughout the North. The affair was an unqualified success and secured \$5,000 to contribute to the Union efforts. The County Board of Supervisors gave each volunteer a \$150 bonus, raising it to \$300 in January of 1865.

Material goods were also sent to the front. One such box was packed September 15, 1863, and contained 2 sheets, 17 shirts, 17 drawers, 45 handkerchiefs, 4 pounds of ground mustard, 5 pounds of green tea, 20 pounds of dried fruit, nine packages of corn starch, 10 bandages, books, and newspapers. No one knew whether or not these items would reach their destinations intact, or for that matter, what their destinations would be. It could only be hoped that a Pekin son would be on the receiving end of at least some of the supplies.

Of the 11 Union League founders, one Dr. Daniel Clivever reportedly operated a "depot" of the underground railroad at his home on the corner of Court and Capitol Streets. Samuel Woodrow, an original Pekin settler (Catherine Street was named for his wife) and his brother Hugh (for whose spouse Amanda Street was named) were also active in the fight against slavery and the business of aiding slaves to escape, but they moved their base of operations south of Pekin to Circleville. That there were others involved in similar operations is fairly certain, but who they were is quite another matter. During the war, operators of the underground railroad were of necessity very secretive, so few of their contemporaries could identify them. Afterwards, when the Union victory made such efforts not only popular, but even heroic, many claimed to have been involved who had had nothing whatsoever to do with such a movement, with the result that an accurate account of what actually took place is simply not available.

Because the Confederate cause was considered a rebellion, there was no formal peace declared at the end of the Civil War. A number of skirmishes took place for some time after Lee's surrender, and a group of Pekin volunteers fought in the last of these—the Battle of Spanish Fort, fought in Texas considerably after Lincoln's assassination. Ironically enough, the Union troops were defeated in this encounter.

Although records of the deaths resulting from the war are inadequate and inaccurate, it is estimated that approximately 300 of the Tazewell County volunteers lost their lives. Of this number, far more succumbed to disease than to injuries sustained on the battlefield.

Many Pekin soldiers never returned from the Civil War; others wore battle scars for the rest of their lives; but their experiences apparently did not intimidate their descendants, and when the Spanish American War began in 1896, Pekin young men again rallied to the call. "Company C" was mustered and organized under Captain E.L. Conklin, but the group never saw action, although some Pekinites serving in other units did get overseas.

The story is told that Franklin Velde, long-time Pekin lawyer, was one of the best shots in the Pekin company; however, he was left-handed. When this defect was called to his attention by Army authorities, he protested that he was, nevertheless, one of the best shots in the company. "We have enough men here to lick the Spaniards right-handed," was the reply, and he was mustered out. As it turned out, there were enough men to lick the Spaniards without Com-



pany G, the surrender cancelled their sailing orders, and a community at peace welcomed a new century.

However, the turn of the century was soon marred by the outbreak of World War I in 1914, and the city of Pekin began to experience a tremendous change. As in the Civil War, Pekin was, in the early days, a divided city. With its big population of German extraction and its long maintenance of the German language and other Old World associations, there was naturally a considerable sympathy for the German cause in the European War. By this time, though, most of the Pekin people had roots at least 50 years deep in America and their own community, and their first loyalty was unquestionably to the U.S. The city responded to the war's challenge with hundreds of men, who served scattered throughout the U.S. forces rather than in separate Pekin companies as had so long been the practice.

Throughout the war, soldiers-to-be were mustered at the Court House in groups of 30 or more and escorted to the train bound for camp by a band. Roy King, one of many Pekin boys to serve with the A.E.F. on the fields of France, was the first Pekinite killed, and the local A.E.W. post is dedicated to his memory.

The war had a profound affect on the city. Down came the signs, "German spoken here," that had stood in store windows for 50 years; the *Free Presse*, operated by the late Jacob Schmidt, became the *Free Press*; the German type was discarded and English type was purchased. The German-American bank became the American National. German ceased to be the language spoken from many of the pulpits in Pekin churches, and the parochial schools also abandoned the language. Soon thereafter, the German parochial schools themselves were closed.

Thus, the war with Germany, a tragedy in that numerous Pekinites lost their lives on the battlefields, was also a kind of release for the city that had been held back for so long by its ties to the Old Country.

With the advent of World War II, Pekin was no longer a city divided between secessionists and abolitionists, or Germans and Americans, for the surprise air strikes on Pearl Harbor and Wake Island left two of the city's young citizens dead. On December 7, 1941, P.F.C. Philip Fohn was killed at Pearl Harbor, and Sergeant Henry D. Nauminger was struck down on Wake Island, both young men were Marines. After those sneak attacks, Pekin went into the war 100 per cent. Before the war's close literally thousands of Pekin men and women served in every branch of the Armed Forces. Pekin boys fell in action in North Africa, Italy, France, and Germany, and across the

Pacific from Okinawa to Hawaii.

Again, those left at home rallied to promote the war effort. Rationing was in effect, and there were times when staples such as sugar or meat simply were not to be had, since as much food as possible was shipped abroad to feed the troops. Also, the Japanese airpower brought a new dimension to our involvement in the war, with the possibility that the town itself could be struck from the air. Air raid drills were organized, block wardens appointed, and periodic blackouts enforced (hard as it may be to picture today's city without a single light on). Fortunately, there was never a need for any but practice drills.

At this point, a slight digression from the topic at hand is necessary to explain the reasoning behind the manner in which we have dealt with the last two wars in which Pekinites have been engaged. Abraham Lincoln reportedly had a habit of never making a letter for at least three days after he wrote it—especially if the letter were emotionally incited. He recognized that a few days of "cooling off" often brought great changes as to priorities and point of view. We are basically in agreement with Lincoln's philosophy, and we feel that if three days are needed for a single letter, perhaps three decades are in order for a war. For that reason, the following data regarding the Korean and Vietnam conflicts is purposefully brief and sketchy. We leave it to future students of history to judge, a bit more objectively and unemotionally than we can now, the effects of these two man-made catastrophes on Pekin.

Both Korea and Vietnam differed from the other conflicts in which Pekinites had been engaged, in that the U.S. did not really feel directly threatened by the "enemies." Although support was sent to both South Korea and South Vietnam to halt Communist aggression in the Far East, public opinion was divided regarding the need for such action.

By the time the Korean "police action" was initiated in the 1950's, Pekin, as well as the rest of the nation, was simply exhausted from war, and the fanfare and zealous patriotic support which characterized World War II were substantially dissipated.

The Vietnam entanglement found our city initially concerned, but soon growing disenchanted. Many young men from Pekin went to the war (although the majority were draftees, not volunteers) but some others actually refused to serve, taking such extreme measures as self-exile to Canada. Perhaps that's the greatest tragedy of this war: the divisions it caused among the people.

The spirited support exhibited during World War II by such groups as the "Grey Ladies," who prepared

and mailed literally thousands of packages overseas, was conspicuously absent. For the most part, the local churches assumed the responsibility for keeping our soldiers in touch with home, so that what had once been considered everyone's patriotic duty became the religious obligation of a considerably smaller group.

But one event directly related to the Vietnam conflict renewed, for a time, the patriotic spirit of the 1940's. This was the return to Pekin of Staff Sergeant Stanley Newell after his release in early 1973 from a POW (prisoner of war) camp in North Vietnam, where he had been held since his capture on July 12, 1967. Concern for the POW's was one topic on which most in the nation were basically united, and many Pekinites, especially young people, wore bracelets bearing the name and date of capture of a POW as reminders of those many feared were becoming the forgotten victims of the war. For these people the release of the American prisoners was the culmination of months of work, and Newell's return on March 24, 1973, was a special highlight for Pekinites involved in the POW movement. Stan was honored, on his return, by young and old alike—a united action prompted, perhaps, by opposing motives.

With the Vietnam War, then, the Catastrophies Unit comes to a close. The spirited nature with which Pekinites have worked together to recover from the setbacks discussed here is commendable by any standards. Thus, the events recorded in this segment, although disastrous, have been *small* steps backwards, and the community has maintained a progressively

forward motion in spite of them. It is comforting to know that such a spirit prevails in a community, but we still hope that any future additions to this unit will be few in number, and that the Pekin of the future will be involved in building anew, rather than rebuilding from what is left of the old.



*Stanley Newell addresses citizens assembled to welcome him home after spending more than five years as a North Vietnam prisoner of war*

# 8

## Landmarks

This brief unit is, admittedly, a "catch-all" one. Included are several facets of Pekin's physical development which simply do not fit well into other areas of this book, but which, nevertheless, are important. That, then, is the first criterion applied to inclusion in this section—not being mentioned in any great detail elsewhere in the book.

The second criterion is that, as a landmark, the structure or areas must be something which Pekinites often use as a point of reference. For example, one might allude to a particular business as "two blocks east of the Post Office," or to a certain residence as "a mile north of the cemetery."

Such is the stuff that this unit is made of. In terms of copy, the unit is short; but it includes many pictures, which probably bring back more memories than any number of volumes of writing could.

Let us begin, then, with some of the landmarks of "Pekin Past." Structures included here will be those which were, in their day, important, oft-used facilities, but which have since given way to age and progress. A good example of this is the Lazewell Club, the gathering place for Pekin's social set around the turn of the Century, incorporated in 1893 with Judge George C. Rider as president and O. F. Webber as secretary. The club existed to "promote the business interests of the city of Pekin and for the social enjoyment of its members," with facilities where "the professional man, the business man, and the clerk may congregate during leisure time to enjoy a few hours in wholesome recreation."

Christened "The Lazewell Club of Pekin," the or-

ganization established headquarters on the second floor of the Friederich Building at the corner of South Fourth and Elizabeth Streets. Here, members "enjoyed the pleasure of a cozy parlor and pleasant reading room, an attractive billiard hall and card room—all of which were furnished with a taste that was highly commendable." And here the club remained until a new four-story building was erected at the corner of Fourth and St. Mary Streets in 1896, at a cost of \$12,000.

The elaborate dedicatory program on February 12, 1896, included President Henry Herget's address of



*The Lazewell Club*

with 1900, two other speeches, a long recitation, and several musical numbers by Gehrig's Band, making it the "most notable social event in the history of the city."

The building had bowling lanes on the basement floor, meeting rooms and billiard tables on the first floor, a ballroom on the second floor, and a large unused attic above that.

The New Year's Eve Ball was the outstanding social event in Pekin for many years. The club also offered an entertainment series annually, including traveling concert groups and public speakers. The organization extended use of club rooms to members of the Pekin Women's Club and the "Litta" Society for their semi-monthly afternoon meetings.

The principal source of revenue was a \$20 membership fee and annual dues of \$18, later raised to \$24, however, with the advent of other social clubs, both the building and organization declined.

The Herget National Bank bought the property in December, 1959, for \$50,000, allowing the club to be kept open until May to permit the completion of the winter bowling season. Then the fixtures and antique furnishings were sold at auction. The proceeds of the sale and auction were distributed in equal portions to members of record, and many of them donated their money to charity. The building was demolished in the summer of 1960 to make room for a bank parking lot.



*The Carnegie Library*

A second structure worthy of mention here is also due to soon become a landmark of Pekin: Past the Carnegie—Pekin Public Library. As this copy is being

written, the structure is still standing, but plans call for its demolition early this summer. But a little history is in order before we discuss the topic any further.

A group of 23 women, feeling the need for a library in the growing city of Pekin, formed the "Ladies' Library Association" on November 24, 1866. A City Council grant of \$100 (originally it had been \$200, but the Council had a change of heart) along with citizen donations and subscriptions provided backing for the project, which was initially housed in one room of the Frederick Building. Librarian William Prince oversaw the operation, which was open Tuesday evenings from 7-9 and Saturdays from 2-5 and from 7-9. Patrons paid 25¢ for six weeks' library privileges, 50¢ for six months, or \$1.00 per year. Shortly after this, Mrs. Eva Hammond was appointed librarian and given the staggering salary of \$8.00 per month.

In 1889 the library was moved to the old City Firehouse at the corner of Seventh and Court Streets. Ten years later, having again outgrown its quarters, it was moved to the second floor of the Steinmetz Building and was open every weekday afternoon and evening.

Not until 1896 did it become city property. About this time Miss Mary E. Gaither, member of the library board, succeeded in securing support from Andrew Carnegie, who pledged \$15,000 for the erection of a permanent building, providing the city had a satisfactory site. George Herget donated the present site at Broadway and Fourth Streets.

Carl Herget, in the meantime, gave \$1,000 for the purchase of books, on the condition that citizens raise a like amount. Later, Carnegie upped his original offer to \$25,000, and thus was laid the foundation for the Pekin Public Library.

There has been some local resistance to tearing down this old library, a Pekin landmark since 1902, but many of these objectors were laboring under the incorrect assumption that the Carnegie Building was especially unique unto Pekin. In point of fact, the steel magnate donated money to build over 2,400 libraries—all bearing a striking resemblance to each other—and at least 1,900 of these are still standing throughout the country.

In the early 1960's, the library purchased property immediately south of the Carnegie Building. The Presbyterian Church and another house owned by the church were razed to make room for the Everett Dirksen Congressional Leadership Research Center, on which construction is now being completed and which will also house the Public Library. The struc-

ture is scheduled for dedication during this Sesquicentennial celebration.

The post office serves as a good transition from the non-existent to the existent, since the "old post office" is still standing, but no longer serves in its former capacity. In 1892 an appropriation of \$70,000 was made "with an additional appropriation up to \$80,000," for a Federal Building for Pekin. Prior to that time, the post office had occupied so many different locations it would be virtually impossible to name them all. It is of interest to note, though, that the first free delivery of city mail, was made in 1886.



*The old Pekin post office on the corner of Elizabeth and Capitol*

After much heated controversy concerning the location for the new Federal Building, the site of the former Prettyman Homestead at Elizabeth and South Capitol was chosen and purchased for \$15,000. But when local bids, based on plans and specifications submitted by the supervising architect of the Treasury Department in 1904, were forwarded to Washington, they were all rejected because they were not within the limits of the contract price; and so new bids had to be submitted. Consequently, it was not until 1905 that the structure was finally completed at a cost of approximately \$100,000.

The architecture of the building reflects Colonial influences. The walls are red and struck brick, laid English cross bond, trimmed with buff-colored *terra cotta*. The cornice over the main entrance is ornamented with bold cartouche, and the approaches have granite steps. Besides the post office, the building housed, on the second floor, Pekin's Home Bu-

reau, the Army Recruiting Office, and the Treasury Department's offices.

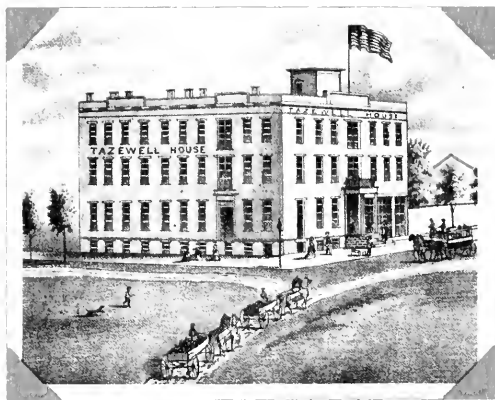
The building served Pekin until 1966, when the present facilities were finished. In 1967 it was sold to Lee Tosi, who in turn sold it to Morige Realty in June of 1972. As mentioned in the Education Unit, the structure has been leased in recent years for use by the Pekin Area Vocational Center; plans for its future, after the Vocational Center moves to its new site in 1975, are uncertain.

To bring the information about the postal facilities up to date, some mention of the present post office is appropriate. On November 12, 1964, Postmaster General John A. Gronowski announced that a contract had been awarded to Eckstein and Sicmann of Cassville, Wisconsin, to build a new post office here, with an initial investment by the bidder of \$376,750. The contract called for the building to be leased to the postal service for 20 years, with renewal options running through 30 years at an annual rental of \$31,650 for the basic term. The building, now owned by Raymond Eckstein, an attorney in Wisconsin, has an interior space of 16,524 square feet. The area for parking and movement of postal vehicles totals 21,908 square feet.

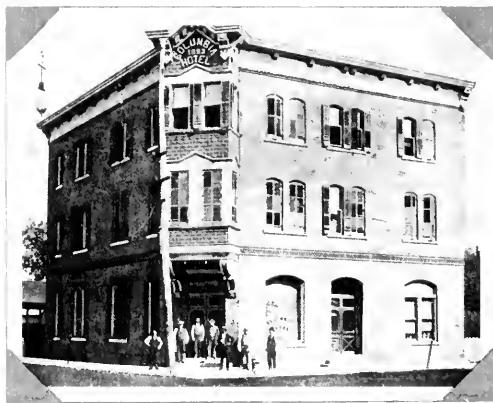
A comparison of data from opposite extremes of a 25-year period gives a good indication of the growth of the postal facilities and services in Pekin. In fiscal 1948, the post office, under the guidance of Roy S. "Peach" Preston, a noted Pekin resident, employed 34 regulars and eight substitutes, and had total receipts of \$139,908.24. Fiscal 1973 found the post office with 74 employees and receipts of \$832,277.33. With the recent increase in postal rates (from 8¢ to 10¢ for a first class letter), current postmaster Francis J. McLanden will probably see receipts right at, if not in excess of, \$1 million for fiscal 1974.



*The present Pekin post office*



Throughout the years Pekin has witnessed many popular hotels. The Tazewell House (upper left) was operated by former Sheriff Timm; the Mexican American War hotel, the Woodland Hotel (upper right) later changed hands and was known as The Tazewell (lower left). The Columbia was later known as the LaMondine owned by Emil Neubauer, a sheriff during the "Roaring twenties" and then the Windsor. The Tom Harris Red Top is Timm's place on the site today.



Any discussion of present landmarks, which we now undertake, must include the various cemeteries in and around Pekin. The earlier burial grounds serving Pekin include the Haines Graveyard, just off South 14th Street on the outskirts of town. This site was given by Joseph Haines in the late 1820's, and the first body interred was that of his daughter-in-law, Jane Adames Haines.

Then followed, about 1830, the City Cemetery, located on ground now occupied by the Quaker Oats Company. At first some of Pekin's older and most prominent citizens of the city's early years were buried here; however, in later years it was abandoned as

a burial ground for all but paupers, who were interred at the expense of the town.

With the outbreak of cholera and typhoid in the fall of 1854, the need for additional space became imperative, and the Tharp Cemetery, present site of the Douglas School, came into being. An interesting sidelight on this cemetery concerns the removal of the bodies in later years for re-interment at Lakeside Cemetery. A total of 100 bodies were exhumed by John F. Reed and T. J. Davis, who charged the city \$4.48 for 80 of the bodies but only \$2.44 for the other 20. The reason for the difference in cost is a mystery.

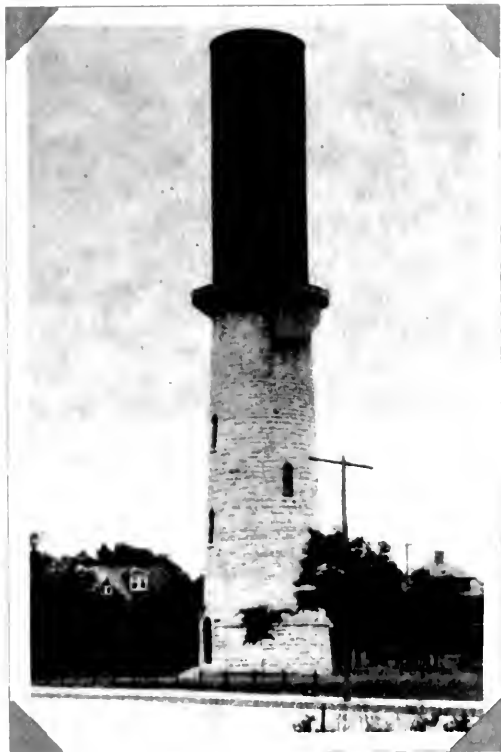
Records indicate that the next cemetery in the community was laid out in 1857 by the Sons of Temperance Order on land near the East Bluff School. This same group also plotted a six-acre burial ground north of town on the "Pekin and Peoria Road," which was known as Oak Grove Cemetery. Plots ranged in price from six to 15 dollars; however, each member of the Order was entitled to a plot once he had paid its value in dues.

To D. Gilman Bailey and his wife is given the credit for plotting the original Lakeside Cemetery about 1874. This, Oak Grove, and Shillings Addition were incorporated April 1, 1901, as Lakeside Cemetery, following the formation of a cemetery association in 1898. A \$252,000 mausoleum was built at the south end of the burial ground and dedicated June 23, 1929. It contains 11 private family rooms (all sold), 944 sim-

gle crypts, and 20 niches for cremation urns.

While Lakeside was being developed, Sacred Heart Catholic Cemetery was being laid out, adjoining it to the north. On September 22, 1916, another Catholic Cemetery—St. Joseph's—Roman Catholic—opened. This burial place of slightly over three acres is located about one-half mile south of Pekin on the east side of Fifth Street Road. The first burial there was August 25, 1917.

As increased population created a need for more burial space, the Lakeview Cemetery was laid out on North Eighth Street, across from Lakeside. Many of



For many years a familiar city landmark was the cylindrical stone base that supported Pekin's only water tower at Capital and Broadway.



Bailey's Lake as it appeared at the turn of the century before it was subdivided into Lake Arlann.



The old Terminal Station on West Main, just across the river from the first passenger depot, until the late Twenties.

the bodies from the abandoned City Cemetery were transferred to this new one. On May 22, 1971, Lakeview was purchased by the Lakeside Cemetery Association.

Also established in Pekin on North Eighth Street, just south of the former Lakeview, was the Veterans' Memorial Cemetery. This one-quarter acre plot is centered around a memorial shaft dedicated to Pekin's World War II dead. To be buried here, one must have at one time been a resident of Tazewell County and a veteran of a foreign war. The first burial was October 31, 1946, with official incorporation and dedication on May 18, 1947. Then-Congressman Everett Dirksen was the guest speaker.

Pekin's newest cemetery, although not actually within the city limits, is Glendale Memorial Gardens, owned by Glendale Memorial Gardens, Inc., with headquarters in Peoria. The 25-acre site is divided into various gardens, including such sections as Christus, Devotion, Last Supper and Gethsemane, Sermon on the Mount, Atonement and Restoration, and a special Masonic Garden for Masons and their families. It differs from all other Pekin cemeteries in that all grave markers must be flush with the ground, a relatively recent trend in cemetery design all over the country. Glendale is presently the burial place of the late Senator Everett Dirksen, although there is some speculation that his body will be re-interred in the library and research center which bear his name.

Any newcomer to this city is immediately struck by the presence of a vast, empty, square block practically right in the middle of town, just across Broadway from the West Campus of Pekin High School. No, it isn't a prospective cemetery. It is James Field, and the myths and legends concerning it that have arisen over the last 50 years are innumerable and deserve straightening out. Included in these rumors are stories that the field was donated by someone named James, or that the field was named for St. James, since two churches are nearby. Both are far from the truth, and the actual story follows.

On June 5, 1916, a contract of sale and purchase was made between a group consisting of David Mark Cummings and his wife Ruth, along with Cummings' sister, Grace and her husband John D. Bergquist, and a second party—the Board of School Inspectors of Pekin School District. (Pekin then had only one school district, as explained in the Education Unit.) The agreement called for the School Board to buy nine lots (93-101) in Colts Addition for \$7,000; the payments were to be spread over three years and bear interest at 5% per annum.

But the most interesting part is yet to come. The



*Lakeside Cemetery as it appeared at the turn of the century with only one grave visible, long before the Mausoleum was constructed*



*Today Lakeside has grown tremendously, and it is characterized by its impressively carved monuments and the Mausoleum in the rear center of the picture*

sellers, descendants of Columbus Cummings (discussed in the Government Unit), attached some very unusual stipulations to the sale. The premises had to be forever used as a playground and athletic field for the public schools of the Pekin School District or its successors and all other public schools maintained within the corporate limits of the city of Pekin. (This poses an interesting present-day legal question, since by technical definition Illinois Central College is within the corporate limits of Pekin.) Further, no building could ever be erected on the property other than



those pertaining to the use of the grounds as a playground or athletic field. Last, the sellers reserved the right to name the field, and stated that it shall be forever known as "James Field." And just for a kicker, the sellers added a stipulation that if all the terms of the contract were not faithfully carried out, a forfeiture could be declared and the land would revert back to the sellers or their heirs.

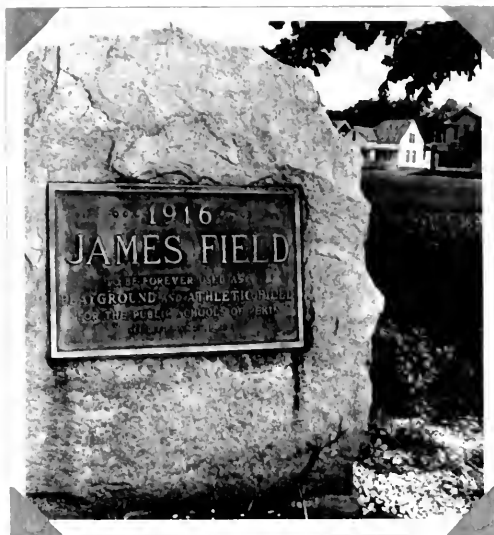


A few of the various garden monuments in the Wendell Memorial Garden are visible in the background.

There was no explanation given as to why the marker was named James, and although some research indicated the fact that David and Grace Cummings had a brother named James who died at age five—which would have added a nice sentimental touch to the story—we have established beyond a reasonable doubt that it was named for Colonel James M. James, a former president of the Farmers Bank, the agent for the vast Cummings Estate in this area, and a close friend of the Cummings family.

Further research indicates that when the present dual school district was formed, the original board, which became the grade school board, kept all assets in existence at that time. So, technically, the grade school "owns" the property, but it is the high school which utilizes it most and maintains it. At any rate,

the mystery of James Field has been cleared once and for all.



James Field's incongruity with its name and location, that is, the West Campus on the north, business to the east, residences to the south, and a church to the west, is suggested in this picture of the marker in the northwest corner.

It is with great hesitancy that we embark upon a revision of a couple of Pekin's older homes, since there are so many that could be mentioned. Manly, stately mansions line Washington and Park Avenue Streets. We have chosen two to discuss, not only because of their history and unique character, but also because they are very much a part of the Court Pekin scene.

The first of the structures is Rupert Park, probably known to most Pekinites today as the Noel-Henderson Funeral Home at 420 Walnut Street. The Southerners had plantations, the Easterners had estates, but the Midwest, with its many German settlers, had parks, for such were they called in the old country.

Gideon Rupert was one of the pioneer settlers and early businessmen in Pekin, having opened a mercantile business on Court Street in 1855. He is given credit for naming Lazewell County after Governor John Lazewell of Virginia, also a United States Senator; but more specifically, it is Rupert who, about 1862, built the beautiful structure on Walnut Street



Noel-Henderson Funeral Home.

that is quite typical of the style of architecture favored by the wealthy Germans of that time, and that is also one of the last remaining examples of this style of architecture in Pekin. Set far back on the huge lot (it used to be an entire block square, with the main entrance on "Delavan" Street—that's Fifth Street today), the 11-room Colonial structure has a sandstone foundation with triple-thick brick exterior walls. At one time, the property included a greenhouse and a summer house, but both of these have been removed. Most of the windows are leaded glass.

The interior of the structure is, in a word, magnificent. The living room was 18 x 40 feet and included two marble fireplaces. There are a total of eight fireplaces in the home in all. All rooms have 10-foot ceilings and originally had hardwood floors with various designs. These have since been carpeted. Also gone are the gas lights; but the wallpaper has been kept almost identical to the original. After Gideon died, his son Frank and family lived in the dwelling for many years. It is truly a landmark worthy of mention in this book and something of which Pekin can be proud.

There are so many "Herget" homes in Pekin that even some old-timers get into heated discussions about who lived where and which came before what. Although we could spend a great deal of time and space here clearing up some of that controversy a little bit, this "original" Herget homes were *not* on the north side of Pekin at all, we leave it to some publication more concerned with old residences to thoroughly research that area. There is, however, one old

Herget home which we will mention, since it is today a noted Pekin landmark in that it serves as the meeting place for the local Knights of Columbus. We refer to the "Henry Herget Home" at 615 Park Avenue.

Herget apparently purchased the land in 1896 from William Blenkiron for around \$1,700. Records would further indicate that the house was built sometime between then and 1901 by Jacob Roelfs (of Velde-Roelfs Lumber Company) at a cost of \$7,000. The blueprints were drawn by one W. K. Johnson of Chicago. An investment of nearly \$9,000 was quite sizable at the turn of the century, but then the house was not exactly a typical family dwelling.

The upper story of five rooms, many of which have curved plate glass windows, also contains a bathroom complete with a ceramic-tiled square bath tub. The main floor is something to behold, from the huge entrance hall laid with imported tiles, right through the various rooms, each of which has woodwork in a different wood (oak, walnut, cherry, and maple) and a fireplace done in a different stone. In the rear of the home, off the kitchen, was a flower room, with water piped in through lead pipes which have since broken and been replaced. Even the basement contained a fireplace and plateglass windows, long before the advent of recreation rooms. A huge circular porch surrounds the front and east side of the house.

Mrs. Herget died in February of 1952, and the house stood vacant for about two and a half years, until it was finally bought in December of 1954 by Mr. and Mrs. Ernest Svendsen, who remodeled the huge carriage house on the rear of the property for their dwelling and ultimately sold the house proper to the K of C, who have added more basement space for use as recreational facilities.

We turn our attention now to the last major area that will be considered in this unit—one of which the entire community is justifiably proud—Pekin Memorial Hospital. The non-profit corporation was established in 1913, but the first hospital did not open its doors until 1915, with completion of a \$50,000 structure built on land donated by three Erbacher Brothers—George Jr., Henry, and O. D.—and their wives. The initial capacity was 30 patients, and the main entrance was on 14th Street. In 1931, a \$150,000 fund-raising drive (no small feat during a depression) resulted in additional construction and remodeling which boosted the capacity to 75 beds. This portion of the hospital is on Park Avenue, and for many years the main entrance was from that street.

Early in the 1950's an expanding city population manifested itself in a critical shortage of beds and supportive facilities. A successful \$750,000 local fund-

raising drive, combined with a matching local grant, resulted in the six-story \$1.5 million addition on Park Avenue and increased the hospital's capacity to 150 beds. These facilities were dedicated June 19, 1955.

But Pekin's growth continued, and some of the older parts of the hospital became outmoded, so in the early 1960's another drive was undertaken. This one succeeded in raising \$1 million locally, and hospital officials borrowed another \$1.5 million from a firm in Wisconsin, thus providing the necessary funding for the most recent expansion on Court Street. The main entrance once again was moved, and presently leads into this new six-story addition. Total capacity is now over 230, and plans call for the erection of a sixth and seventh floor on this newest addition which will house an intensive care unit and the obstetrics ward. As these floors are made ready, other areas of the older parts of the hospital will be closed (in fact, at least

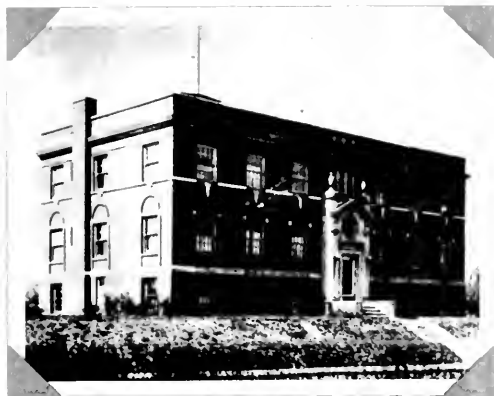
two floors of the old building are to be closed). Capacity will be around 250.

The hospital, operated by a 32 member Board of Trustees, is equipped to handle nearly all types of medical, surgical, pediatric, and obstetrical cases. Over the years Pekin Memorial's services have expanded to include pathology, radiology, physical therapy, inhalation therapy, and extended care and home-care units. The institution is fully accredited and licensed.

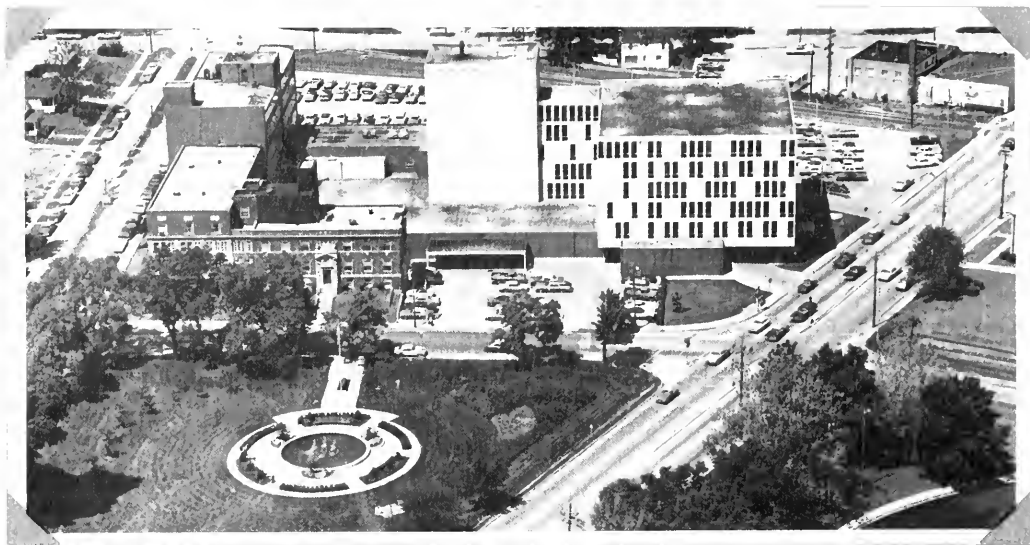
So many more areas could be discussed in this section, but space simply does not permit it. We do hope that the pictures accompanying this copy, along with the bits and pieces of information in the cutlines underneath them, serve to make up for this brevity of length. Further, many other Pekin landmarks can be found in other units of this book, in fact, one could probably make a case for stating that 75% of the pictures and copy in this publication are landmarks.



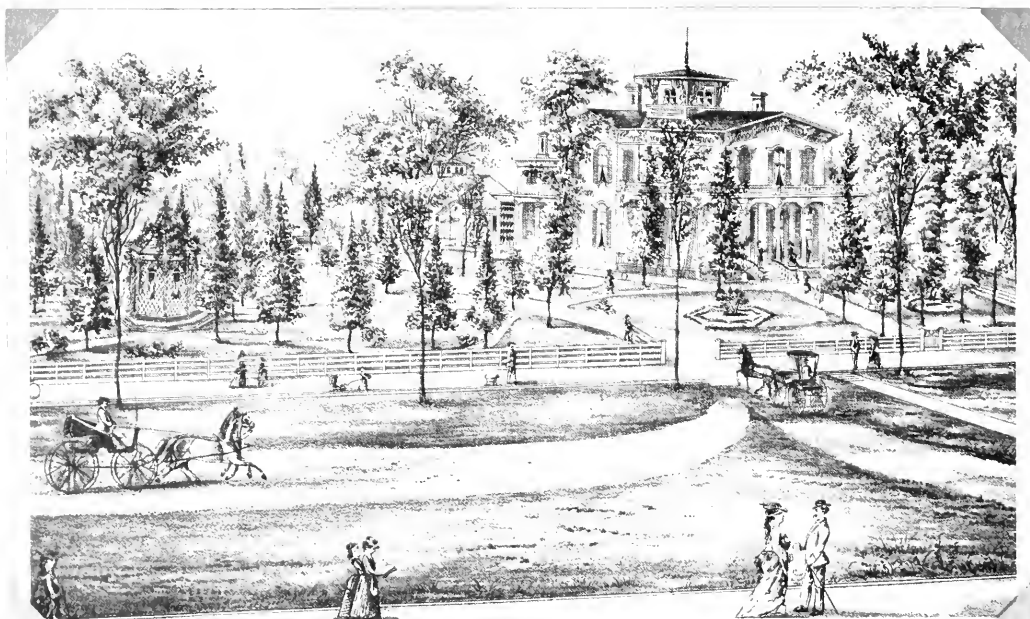
*The Knights of Columbus Hall*



*The Pekin Memorial Hospital c. 1964*



Park at [illegible]





*In later years the Herget family purchased the house and moved into it, then the "Villa Vista".*





*Modern homes have assumed the look of these famous Audubon Drive homes and in Country Club Estates*

# 9

## Education

Pekin residents have always taken a keen interest in the education of their children. The early history of education in our city, though, is a bit complex, since there was no real organization until 1869, when the Pekin School Charter and Law was approved by the State Legislature. This legislation was unique in that it was voted into existence exclusively for Pekin, but restrictive in that it forbade taking in territory beyond the city limits. This restriction caused some problems in 1920 when citizens decided that the community could best be served by the formation of a new high school district, but these details will be discussed later in this section.

This is not to suggest that education was lacking in Pekin before 1869—in fact, there were many schools, both public and private, which deserve mention. The first school, discussed in the Overview, was the Snell School. The Town Board minutes of November 2, 1840, indicate that another school operated from the Methodist Church, for at the meeting a motion was passed to buy a stove from James Tharp for \$20, install it in the basement of the Methodist Church, and lease those premises for a school room. Another motion provided funds for remodeling and furnishing the premises, including erecting a studding partition across the room, plastering the walls, and purchasing 10 desks and “sufficient benches.”

Roots City Directory of 1861 listed six “free schools of the Pekin and Cincinnati Union School District.” These included the “Brick School House,” built in 1849 on Ann Eliza Street between Third and Capitol. The Superintendent of the district was W. Blinn, and

noted Pekinite of the day, and the two-story structure was the first brick building erected for school purposes. The school occupied only the ground floor of the building, so the upper story was used for a time as a meeting place for both the Masons and the Sons of Temperance. Eventually the property was sold to the T. & H. Smith Company.

Also listed in the old directory for that year was the “Cincinnati School,” located at Franklin and Pleasant Streets. This was later sold to the Turner Society, who converted it to a “Turn-Halle.” When the Turners later built the Standard Theatre, the school was converted to a private dwelling. Then there was the “Yellow School House,” on the corner of Second and Susannah Streets. This building, it is recorded, was used for many public gatherings.

The list continues. The “Second Street School,” located between Court and Elizabeth on Second Street (as you may have noticed, originality played a very small part in the naming of these structures), later was used as a shoe shop, a butcher shop, and the headquarters of Louis Fock’s cigar manufactory. The “Frame School House” was constructed on the corner of Capitol and Ann Eliza Streets; it later became a private residence. Rounding out the list is the “German and English School,” located on the east side of North Fourth Street, between Market and Caroline Streets. It was ultimately purchased by the Pekin Plow Company, and ended up serving as the office of the Peoria Truck and Company.

Most of the separate schools in the early years were for the benefit of the German and English

now St. Paul's United Church of Christ, was located on the corner of Seventh and Ann Eliza Streets. It opened with 15 scholars on May 9, 1859, and continued operation through 1912.

More information is available on the second of these private institutions, the St. John's Lutheran Church School. Beginning in 1853, classes for grades one through eight were held in the original church building at the corner of Fourth and Ann Eliza Streets.

The early school set aside the entire morning for religious instruction, while academic subjects were taught in the afternoon. Later, as more emphasis was placed on secular areas, the religion class was limited to one hour in the morning. It wasn't until 1942 that the congregation decided to discontinue the parochial school, at which time the building was sold to the Trades and Labor Assembly for \$10,500.

Also worthy of note is the private school opened during the early 1850's by a Professor and Mrs. St. Matthews, on the corner of Second and St. Mary Streets. There, unruly scholars who could not be controlled in the public schools were taken in charge by the St. Matthews. In its time the school became known as the "bad boy's school." (Yes, Virginia, there really were trouble-makers over 100 years ago!)

Rich as the city once was in private educational institutions, only one remains today—St. Joseph's Parochial School. Its doors were opened to kindergarten through fourth grade students in September of 1951, before the building on the corner of Broadway and Sixth Streets was completed. The school was (and is still) staffed by the Sisters of St. Frances of the Immaculate Conception from Peoria. After the school's dedication by Bishop William Consins (now the Archbishop of Milwaukee) on October 6, 1953, grades five through eight were added as the building was finished; but in recent years, Kindergarten (after the 1963-64 school year) and the seventh and eighth grades (after 1970-71) have been dropped. St. Joseph's today is a six-grade, 12-room institution staffed by 12 teachers, a social worker, a school psychologist, and principal. The present enrollment of 243 may seem small, but the school boasts the city's largest elementary school library.

The 1871 Directory lists, among others, the Second Ward School, the Third Ward School, and the Fourth Ward School. The latter, Pekin's pride and joy for many years, was constructed between 1867-69 at a cost of \$20,000. The huge brick building, located on the present site of the Washington Junior High School, housed grades one through 12, and was the major school in the system.

The school year then consisted of three terms, the first of 16 weeks' duration and the other two lasting 12 weeks each. All children aged six and older were *entitled* to attend. The newest school up to that point, however, was the "Bluff School," which was constructed in late 1869 at a cost of \$1,500. It was known in later years as the Fairmount School and the Allen School, and today the McKinley School occupies the site.

The first Pekin High School graduation occurred in 1873, with six students (three of them named Turner) receiving diplomas. But fate was unkind to that old "Fourth Ward" schoolhouse, for on December 2, 1890, the structure was razed by fire. The story goes that during the holocaust many spectators gathered bits of metal from the melting bell and wore these as watch fobs for years thereafter.

The School Board immediately launched a program for rebuilding (during the interim, classes were held in nearly every church basement and vacant building in town) which resulted in a \$28,000 brick structure containing 18 classrooms, high school recitation rooms, and the Superintendent's office. It was this building which became the old Washington Junior High School when the Community High School District was organized and a new high school completed in 1916.



*The old "Fourth Ward" schoolhouse was razed by fire in 1890.*

In the meantime, increased population necessitated the erection of two other buildings: Lincoln School in 1876, later remodeled and enlarged, and Douglas School in 1882, built on the site of the former Tharp



Cemetery. The Douglas building of 1882, known in its early days as the East Side School, was later torn down to make room for the building which stands on the site today. There was also, some time before 1880, the Feger House, more commonly called the "Baby School," located on the corner of Buena Vista and Broadway. This was a short-lived venture.

There followed, in turn, the present schools of Garfield, Franklin, Jefferson, Roosevelt, and finally, taking us up to 1949, the Fearn Wilson School named for a School Board President.

Also of note before 1949 in the way of buildings in the grade school system was the construction of the new Washington Junior High School. The \$350,000 project was completed in time for classes of the fall of 1950; the building since expanded contained 35 classrooms, an office, an auditorium, and a gymnasium.

A brief discussion in order before turning to more general and recent areas of concern, regarding the creation of Pekin's present high school district. In 1920 the courts declared that the newly formed high school district was illegal, ousted board member Charles Hilst, H. J. Rust, J. C. Gale, W. G. Fair, D. F. Velde, and Ben L. Smith, and fined each of them one dollar for "pretending" to be a high school board. The ruling was based on the special Charter mentioned earlier in this section, granted to Pekin in 1869 which did not allow for taking in territory outside the city limits. The new district had violated the Charter by forming a community district which included North and South Pekin.

By 1921, however, the Charter was abandoned, and the system of dual districts, which exist today, was established. The Grade School District 108 includes grades K-8, while the High School District 505 in-



Built in 1869 to house grade school, Washington School later became the Washington Junior High School. It was torn down in 1950 to make room for the present Washington Junior High, constructed on the same site.

cludes 1906-9-12. A recent referendum, which would have combined both of these districts and five other "feeder" districts into one Unit District, was soundly defeated by area voters.

The original high school (today the older part of West Campus) was built, as mentioned, in 1916. By 1949, the initial structure had been expanded to include more classrooms, an auditorium, a gymnasium, and shop facilities.

Even a quick glance at the "Rule and Regulations," which remained virtually unchanged from the time it was put out by the Pekin Public (Grade) Schools in 1926 until well into the 1930's, gives one some idea of the conditions and values which prevailed in those days. For example, when a female teacher was hired, she had to promise not to be married during the year; if she did get married, she had to resign at the end of the month. Every teacher had to own and read two professional publications selected by the Superintendent, and be able to recite and discuss the subjects of the books at weekly teachers' meetings. All teachers were required, within two years, to secure a teacher's certificate in penmanship. And, of course, teachers

had to pay strict attention to the proper ventilation of their rooms; when the temperature remained below 60 degrees for more than 30 minutes, the Superintendent was to be notified. (It is curious to note, however, that under the heading "The Superintendent and His Duties," no mention is made of his being responsible for keeping rooms above 60 degrees.)

In regard to the financial rewards of teaching, some of the following might be of interest. Substitute teachers received \$4.00 per day; principals received \$12.50 per room per year in addition to their regular salary; up to 1929, Roosevelt teachers got \$25.00 extra and McKinley teachers \$50.00 extra for street car fare to and from their buildings.

The general salary schedule is revealing not only in that the money received was not exactly tremendous, but also in that it points out a prejudice which, to a certain extent still prevails among some members of our community; namely, that the higher the grade taught, the "smarter" a teacher had to be. For example, first year teachers in grades one through four made \$1,000 a year, while fifth and sixth grade teachers earned \$1,050 and the junior high instructors were



*Modern dancing and rhythmic drill, and perhaps, indeed, to be marvelled at the precision and discipline displayed by literally hundreds of students during the 1940s. (Photo by J. H. H. This particular event took place in 1944.)*



*The old Jefferson school building is to be torn down this summer*

paid \$1,100 per annum. The schedule increased proportionately for five years (the top of the scale) to \$1,250, \$1,300 and \$1,350. We might also note that during the Depression years, salaries dipped below the \$1,000 mark.

Another tradition of Pekin's grade school past which many will remember was the annual Field Day. The observance was initiated in 1912 by Director of Physical Education Otto Burg, a stern, militaristic German who demanded, and received, complete cooperation from students and teachers alike. The students, ranging in number from 1,200 in the early days to well over 2,000 in later years, were marched from their schools to assume positions at the Mineral Springs Park. Red ties and ribbons, white dresses, white shirts, and dark trousers made a stunning picture of the children who performed in perfect formation the varied drills and calisthenics. Boys built "living pyramids," while the older girls danced the traditional Maypole Dance. The gala event continued until Berg's retirement in 1942, and then was carried on for a few more years, though with different types of activities, before quietly dying out as values changed and new priorities were established.

The last 25 years have brought significant changes to the grade school system of Pekin. Most notably, there has been the addition of five school buildings within the last two decades: Edison Junior High School in 1954; C. B. Smith School (adjoining Edison) in 1956; Sunset Hills School and Willow School, both completed in 1962, and the Starke School, the

newest facility, completed in 1966.

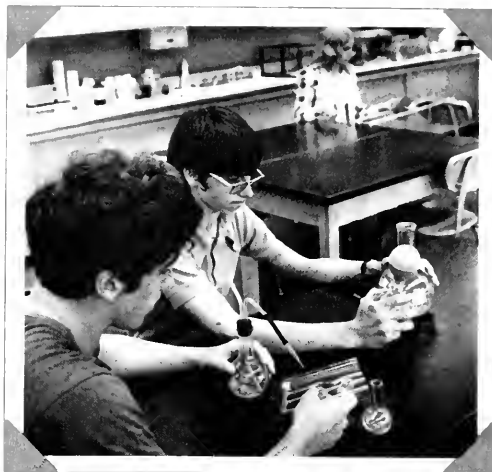
Besides the increase in physical plants, the grade school system has made other noticeable changes since 1949. Included in this list would be the advent of kindergarten for all Pekin five-year olds, the addition of teaching specialists to enhance curriculum, the implementation of athletic programs for girls, and the utilization of many new teaching techniques, such as individualized instruction, team teaching, and educational television. Also, much more use is made these days of visual aids, be it slides, movies, or video tape machines.

Enrollment in Pekin grade schools, as might be expected, correlates with the increasing population. For example, in 1950, the total number enrolled in grades K-5 was just over 4,400. Ten years later, the figure was up by 700, and by 1965, the number totaled more than 5,800. Still growing, the grade schools reached a peak in 1971, when enrollment totaled 6,100. Since then, with the increasing awareness of "family planning" which came about in the middle '60's, the school enrollment has dropped slightly, this year finding 5,711 in the grade schools. The figure is expected to start back up, however, within the next few years as the city continues to grow.

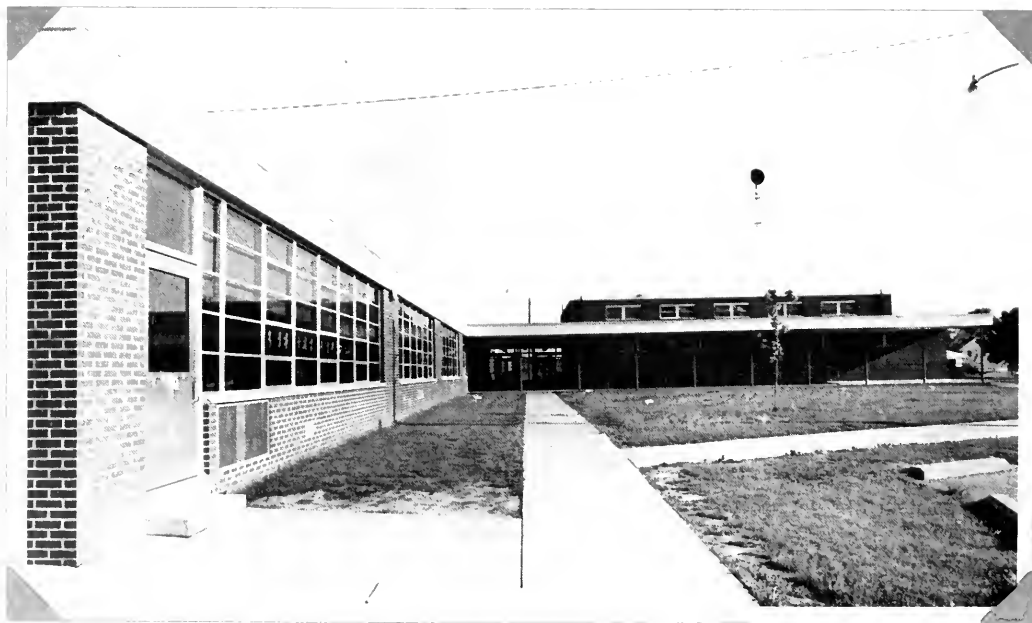
The grade school system is justifiably proud of its achievements over the last few years, especially a noteworthy reduction in teacher-pupil ratio. But the planning goes on, and several projects are now on the drawing board for the next few years, most the result of a successful bond referendum in October of 1973.



*Teachers who have been around for the last 20 years or so observe that as their pupils advance, their desks have to be passed down to the lower grades because students today are simply bigger than their counterparts of even 10 years ago*



*Illinois Central College? No, these students are making use of the well-equipped science lab at Edison Junior High School*



*Modern design is the key to the new school building at Edison Junior High School*

Five specific projects will be inaugurated within the next few years: replacement of Jefferson School; construction of an intermediate school in Broadmoor Heights; installation of a multi-media center in each school in the system; building of a second physical education facility at Edison Junior High School; and construction of an orthopedic facility for physically handicapped children.

Upon completion of these facilities, the grade school district will introduce a new grade level organization containing elementary schools to encompass kindergarten through grade five and intermediate schools for grades six, seven, and eight. In all, there will be 11 elementary schools and three intermediate schools.

Further, plans call for each grade within the intermediate schools to be unique within itself. Grade six will promote a combination self-contained and departmentalized organization. The seventh grade programs will be identical to the present offerings for that level, but the eighth grade curriculum will be expanded to include electives in personal typing, speech, foreign language, art, and vocal music—most of which are now available only in high school.

The establishment of a multi-media center in each school, allowing greater emphasis on individualized instruction, has been hailed by local educators and leading national authorities alike as the greatest innovation to come to grade school instructional programs in many years.

Turning our attention now to the high school district, it must be pointed out that while the grade schools were making all the aforementioned progress, the high school wasn't just sitting idly by. It doesn't take an economics major to figure out that if grade school enrollment was increasing, high school enrollment was following suit. In fact, the percentage was probably a bit higher, in that the community high school is "fed" by not only the Pekin grade school system, but also by districts in North Pekin, South Pekin, Spring Lake, and parts of Creve Coeur and Groveland. Just under a 300% increase has been experienced at Pekin Community High School in the last 25 years: from about 1,200 to over 3,400, making it the largest high school in downstate Illinois. Projected enrollment for 1976 is over 3,500.

Besides many additions and changes to the physical plant of what is now the West Campus, most notably the erection of the "Red Building" and the Leeway (connecting the two main sections of the school) in 1955, the high school has introduced many other instructional changes in the last 20 years. Among these

were the initiation of the "modern math" program (called UICSM—the University of Illinois Committee on School Mathematics) in 1954, the installation of a reading clinic in 1959, and the first use of foreign language laboratories in 1962.

But the two major innovations and changes have taken (and are taking) place in the last decade, although the planning involved started much before then. We allude to the two-campus system now in operation, and the initiation of an area vocational center, which is still, in a sense, in the formative state.

First, some history is necessary. The long-range plans of Pekin Community High School in the late 1950's had called for expansion of facilities on the present West Campus site. These plans had to be revised when a report on street planning in Pekin was released in early 1959, announcing the widening of Eighth Street, part of the area considered necessary for the high school expansion was used for this project, so plans for additions at the West Campus site had to be scrapped.

Meanwhile, back at the drawing table, the Illinois School Consulting Service, which had been engaged by the Board of Education, made a study of the Pekin problem; a report was submitted in June of 1960, which in turn was referred to a Citizen's Advisory Committee. The end result was the recommendation to build a second campus on what was then the Pekin Country Club property.

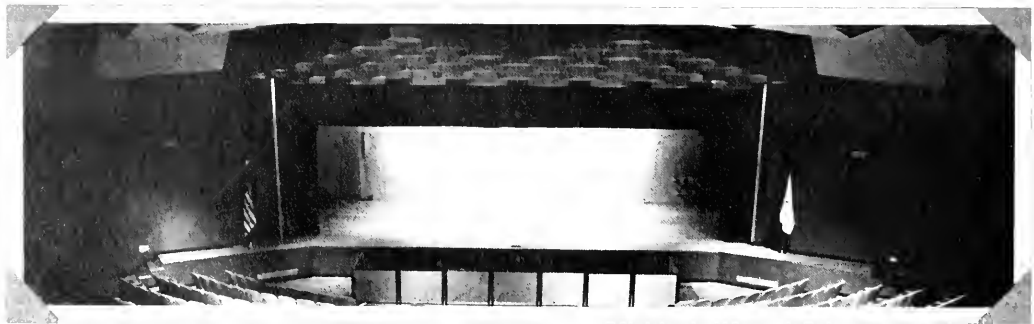
A December 30, 1960, bond issue was successful to the tune of just under \$4 million, which allowed planning to continue and, ultimately, construction to begin in early 1962. The buildings were ready for upper classmen (for the high school had elected to go to a two-two system) in the fall of 1963, although final acceptance of the building did not take place until July of 1964. Total cost of the project, including construction, equipment, bond, and insurance costs was \$4,646,363.04. A humorous sidelight to this whole project is that from the time the purchase of the Country Club was made until the time the club house was razed, it could be stated that Pekin was the only high school district to own a bar.

The beautiful new facility occupies 110 acres, not including the 15 acres taken up by Memorial Stadium, which had been constructed in 1948. The school has a capacity of 2,000 full-time students, a theatre that seats 600 (named the F. M. Peterson Theatre in honor of the District Superintendent who served Pekin Community High School for so many years until his retirement in the middle '60's), and a cafeteria with a seating capacity of 700. At present, students eat on three shifts.



The stadium is a masterpiece of modern architecture, and the seating is comfortable and convenient. The stadium is a masterpiece of modern architecture, and the seating is comfortable and convenient.

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Vocational education is seen by many secondary educators as the most significant change in education in the last 25 years. Vocational education *per se* is not new, but considerably more emphasis has been placed on it in recent years. Besides offering a much wider variety of alternatives to a traditional education, VE is credited with lowering noticeably the "drop out" rate in secondary schools.

The impetus for expansion of the vocational program in Pekin was initiated in May of 1967 when then-Superintendent Robert Cain organized a long-range planning committee to evaluate the needs of Pekin High. Cain resigned (to take a state post), but present Superintendent William Holman carried on, naming six sub-committees, one of which considered the expansion of Vocational Education.

The Pekin Area Vocational Center was established with the start of the 1968-69 school year, and has been operating for the last six years out of the old Post Office, converted for such use and leased to the high school district. That year found eight schools, including Pekin, participating in the program made up of seven courses of study offered to a total of 225 students under the guidance of 11 teachers. In five years, the Area Center has expanded to include 14 participating schools, 23 different courses of study, over 1,000 students, and 31 faculty members.

As the result of a recent, successful, bond referendum, construction is now under way on a new \$3.1 million Vocational Center, to be located at Court and Stadium Drive (between the football stadium and the East Campus). The cost, incidentally, includes the equipment for the Center. The 93,500 square foot

structure will occupy a 15-acre tract. Plans call for the center to open with the 1975-76 school year, and within a few years after that students may be enrolled in such diverse courses as commercial or graphic arts, ornamental horticulture, refrigeration and air conditioning, and vending machine mechanics. These will be added to the already large curriculum which includes such areas as child care, health occupations, data processing, building trades, and marketing, to name but a few.

Another relatively recent innovation in education, which affects both elementary and secondary schools in Pekin, has been the development of Special Education. This branch of education is aimed at helping those students with severe physical or mental handicaps. Pekin is part of the Tazewell-Mason County unit, created through state legislation, which encompasses 28 school districts (22 of them in Tazewell). Students aged three through 21 are eligible for the program, and in recent years Pekin High has graduated its first few Special Ed students. In the planning stage now is the construction of a Child Development Center on Cedar Street in Pekin, which will house, in addition to numerous classrooms, the offices of the Special Education Administrators.

One other school deserves mention in the field of Special Education. Holiday School, a private institution, began some 15 years ago by the parents of several handicapped children who were unable to attend public school since no programs were available for them at the time. After the passage of the state laws creating the public Special Education districts, the Holiday School continued to operate, serving those



*The Holiday School, Pekin's initial step forward in Special Education*

children and adults who were such extreme cases that even the public system could not adequately care for them. The school is funded through local donations (and receives money from the United Fund), and serves approximately 15 children and adults.

Pekin's long insistence upon quality education is capped by Illinois Central College, located on a wooded, 440-acre campus at the north edge of East Peoria. It was largely due to the strong interest of Pekinites that this public community college was begun.

Even before the Korean Conflict, community leaders expressed the need for a "junior college" at Pekin. For over a decade the idea was discussed. In 1959, a committee of 40 persons decided to try to establish such a school. Through 1960, there was a strong campaign for it, but on December 13, 1960, the voters of the district passed a \$3,975,000 bond issue, but turned down the junior college proposal by 141 votes.

The defeat was not decisive. In the summer of 1961, research into the possibilities was resumed by graduate students at Illinois State University, and the committee re-formed with 70 members and five professional consultants in November. Their report was submitted in September 1962.

By that time, several leaders in other communities had become interested. Peoria made a formal study of its junior college potential, and Richwoods, Limestone and others examined their needs. A special steering committee of all the high school districts in the Tri-county area was set up and in May 1966, a referendum was passed to establish a new Class I Community College under the new state law of 1965.

Interim facilities were established by the first Board of Trustees, which included Dr. Donald Wilcox of Pekin, on the new site they procured. On September 18, 1967, classes began for 2,486 students—a "track record" in terms of the brief time spent getting started.

The day after the 1960 referendum was defeated, the *Pekin Daily Times* said editorially, "But it may mean an even finer school someday for the pupils still

in our grade schools." The prophecy is being fulfilled. The permanent campus, in attractive brick buildings especially designed for classroom needs, is rapidly being constructed; portions of it have been in use since August 1972.

There are now nearly 9,800 students attending Illinois Central College from the eight counties of the region. In addition to a full "academic" program of the highest quality (ranging from history through the sciences to the performing arts), they may choose from nearly 60 programs in occupational, business, medical, technological, and industrial fields.

Classes are conducted on the main campus from 7:00 a.m. to 10:00 p.m., and at several attendance centers throughout the district including several at Pekin High School's East Campus. Counseling services, veteran's affairs, a well-developed activities program, intercollegiate sports for both men and women and extensive Adult and Continuing Education programs help the college to be responsive to community needs.

Education has certainly come a long way in Pekin. And, like most other aspects of our development, the struggle for growth has not been an easy one. And, certainly, the problems facing today's schools are vastly different from those of even 25 years ago. The abuse of drugs has become a real concern in local education; students no longer automatically "respect" any and every teacher; teachers themselves have changed greatly, and in many cities are becoming unionized. In Pekin, that has not yet happened, but both the grade and high school teachers have Alliances which work actively in salary negotiations—something unheard of as recently as 20 years ago.

But all in all, Pekin's record in education is an enviable one and speaks for itself. Local citizens have always been concerned with the quality of the schooling being received by their children. Bond issues, though unsuccessful on occasion, have generally met with positive response. In short, Pekin cares about its schools, and educators, in turn, try to respond with programs needed for a rapidly changing world.



## 10

# *Recreation and Entertainment*

This unit attempts to chronicle, in brief fashion, the myriad of different ways in which the residents of Pekin spend (and have spent) their leisure time. It would require several volumes to adequately pay tribute to the various clubs and organizations for the vital role they have played in Pekin's development. Likewise, any thorough discussion of sports and the community's many outstanding teams and athletes would take far more space than can be afforded by this publication. The same holds true for noted Pekin entertainers.

On the other hand, to not devote at least a small portion of the book to this topic would be an unforgivable sin of omission. We hope that readers will put aside personal prejudices for or against a certain club, athlete, entertainer, etc., and simply read this section for what it is intended to be: an attempt to capture some of the spirit and vitality of our city at play.

### PARKS

Certainly an appropriate place to begin any discussion of recreation and entertainment is with the growth of the Pekin Park District. Residents today take pride in the fact that they live in the fourth-largest park system in the state, and with nearly 2,000 acres of recreational facilities, Pekin ranks quite high on a national level when figuring the per capita space available for the district's 55,000 population. But the

beginning was not so glorious as the present situation might suggest.

The Park District itself was organized in 1902, but a Pekin Park goes back two decades before that when, in the spring of 1882, a citizens' meeting was held to organize a company, purchase ground, lay out a park, and drill an artesian well. A charter was granted from the Secretary of State, a company organized, and \$5,000 worth of stock issued and sold.

A 990-foot well was bored to provide mineral water for park use, and from that the park derived its name. In the report of an analysis made by Dr. Emil Pfeifer, head of the Wiesbaden (German) Sanatorium at that time, we learn that he compared the mineral water produced here to that of Baden-Baden, Spring (in Germany, known for its curative powers) and added, "It will produce the same effects—especially in gout, rheumatism, stomach troubles, or sick headache." A chemical analysis made by the University of Illinois in 1896 showed the water to contain a total of 179.44 grams of mineral matter. We will discuss the present well shortly.

Three thousand trees were soon set out in the newly purchased 40-acre tract, a lagoon scraped out, and in 1883 a bath house was erected. During the next years were constructed a swimming pool, a pagoda, and roads and fountains, the people of Pekin were happy to have a park without cost to the citizens. But a cyclone blew down the bath house, pagoda, and a bandstand. The company found itself in arrears, and finally Thomas Cooper, president, paid the bills himself, bought up the stock, put up a new, modern



*This sulphur water fountain was patronized by many Pekinites who were convinced that its waters would cure their ills. Located near the old swimming pool, it has long since been removed.*



*The old park swimming pool was located across from the 14th Street side of the park lagoon in the area now occupied by the horseshoe pits to the south of the Methodist Church.*

building east of the lake, and repaired the bath house. Before this he had offered the park to the city for \$6,000, but the offer was rejected.

Some time later he sold the park to Fred and Henry Schnellbacher and Henry Saal for \$9,000. Soon afterward a fire destroyed the club house, and the owners again offered the park to the city—this time for \$13,000—and again were rejected by a vote of the residents. By 1902, however, there had been a change of attitude, and the voters decided to buy the land... for \$22,500. Plans were made and a contract let the next year for the erection of a pavilion and palm house at a cost of \$15,000. The next spring the lake was deepened and improved in order to allow the use of pleasure boats.

In the summer of 1935, after a second mineral well had been sunk to a depth of 1,080 feet to establish an adequate water supply, a new 532,000 gallon capacity outdoor pool was constructed, at the time the second largest in the state. The pool project was completed in May of 1937 with the opening of a new bath house, bringing the total cost of the project to \$150,000.

The initial well for the park has long since been inoperative, and we could find no records of water analysis (mineral) ever made for the present well. Not to be outdone, we sent a sample of the sulfurous-smelling liquid to the Department of Public Health in Springfield. The first thing we learned is that results are now expressed in parts per million rather than in

grams. However, we also learned that a conversion factor of 17.1 may be used to change results to grains. The ultimate results are quite interesting. The total of all dissolved solids (measured these days by electroconductivity) is 3,360. This means that in grains, the total solids would equal 196.5, or a figure slightly higher than the original well! It was carefully pointed out to us, however, that testing methods are greatly advanced today, and that taking that into account along with the various changes that have undoubtedly occurred in the natural watersheds, the results are very close. A check with Park Director Steve Carpenter revealed that some people (a few on doctor's orders) still bring containers to the park in the summer months to be filled. There used to be an outside faucet at the well, but this has been removed. One other note in passing: Pekin's city water, which is generally considered to be "hard" averages about 25; the park water has a hardness of 140. Some people might drink it, but we doubt if any wash their hair in it.

Many Pekinites will remember the greenhouse located next to the pavilion. Built in 1925, it was used by the Park District to raise as many as 15,000 plants annually, most of which were then placed on park property. The structure also served as a beautiful, decorative highlight of the Christmas season, as a huge pine tree would be placed there and lighted at night, reflecting off the adjacent lagoon. But, having fallen into disrepair, the greenhouse was torn down about five years ago.

In addition to the pool, pavilion, and walk, the city's most centrally located park includes picnic shelters, tennis courts, baseball diamonds, horseshoe courts, a playground area for children (including a Kiddie Korral), concession stands, lighted shuffleboard courts, boat rentals for the lagoon, miniature golf, and the beautiful Memorial Arena. This last building was constructed in 1964 as a cooperative effort of the Park District and the Fair Association. The 34,800 square foot unit houses an indoor ice rink during the winter months and is also used for various shows, fairs, meetings, concerts, etc.

Up to this point, everything mentioned has concerned Mineral Springs Park, the oldest and probably most-utilized of all the Park District facilities. In addition to the 90 acres at Mineral Springs, though, the Park District also has a 120-acre golf course (Parkview on East Broadway Road) and plan to open a second course (Lack Creek, out North Sheridan Road) by 1975. The District also owns three other small, old parks within the city: Benis, a one-acre tract donated by Henry Roos at the foot of Court Street; Willow, two acres at Willow and Fifth Streets, including two tennis courts; and Tot Lot, one acre at Park Avenue



The lake in Mineral Springs Park shown upper left was photographed in 1919 before the gazebo was planned. The fountain guttering installed. The picture in the upper right may look a little more familiar, but since it was taken a few years after the guttering was installed, the picture in the lower left of this page was taken inside the pavilion house during the 1928 Mum Show. And, finally, the Sunken Garden in the middle left of this page was taken before the fountain was installed.





*Mineral Springs Park lagoon and pavilion as they look today.*

and South Sixth Street, bequeathed by Miss Anna Blenkiron in May of 1945 for use as a playground for children from two through six years of age.

In recent years the Park District has grown tremendously. The development of Kiwanis Park, a seven-acre area located behind Starke School, was a cooperative effort of the Pekin Kiwanis Club and the Park District. Tante Park, consisting of 40 acres, is located six miles east of Pekin on the Broadway Road and contains picnic facilities, teepee shelters, a comfort station, playfield, and nature area.

By far the largest addition to the District, the 1,309 acres of the John T. McNaughton/Everett McKinley Dirksen Park complex, located north of Pekin on ei-

ther side of Route 98, stands as one of the most beautifully endowed natural areas in the Midwest. This complex includes the Delshire Stables, Clara Soldwedel Girl Scout Camp, the three-acre Calvin Butterfield Lake, Pottowatomi and Running Deer Hiking Trails (totaling 20 miles of interesting and scenic walking), as well as picnic areas and another small lake.

The most recent acquisition for the Park District was the 385-acre Caterpillar Park, formerly the Caterpillar Proving Grounds in Marquette Heights. The District is now working on a master plan for the development of this year-old gift, the largest ever made by Caterpillar to a non-profit organization.

Two more facets of the Park District deserve attention before moving to other areas. The first is the Wenger Showmobile, a portable stage on wheels, which is owned by the Lazewell County Fair Association and operated by the Park District. The unit, large enough to accommodate a 75-piece band, houses its own lighting and sound system. It continues

lighting and public address systems. Capable of being towed anywhere in the District, the Showmobile has been used for concerts, fashion shows, political rallies, and beauty pageants.

The second area has become Pekin's most-noted re-



Bemis Park



Tot Lot



Dirksen Park



Al's Nightclub



*Fairgrounds, Peoria, Illinois, 1960, Peoria, Illinois, Park*

community. The Fairgrounds, which had been the site of the Sink-a-Song contest since 1938, had been the site of the holding of the Peoria Club in 1944 for 1950. This tax assessment paid for the construction of the park. The project of restoring the park was begun in 1960 by the Peoria Club, a service organization made up of Peoria's professional women. Under the leadership of Mrs. Irabell Schitzgerber, chairman of the project, and her assistant, Mrs. Frances Stevens, the members of the club raised funds through various sales; numerous donations were made by interested individuals and businesses, and other service clubs in the community stepped in, as did the Park District and the Forest Park Foundation of Peoria. Further, a federal grant from the Department of Housing and Urban Development to the Park District was directed for use in the project. The culmination of this total community effort was the \$41,293 fountain (completed in 1970 and dedicated in 1977) which dazzles natives and newcomers alike with its varied shapes and patterns, not to mention the brilliant colors at night, pre-

senting the light from the bottom of the fountain. It is one of those rare areas where people from all age groups and all walks of life gather in a common bond of pride and enjoyment.



*Peoria, Illinois*

## SPORTS

Pekin Community High School has a long tradition of remarkable performance in athletics, supported by an enthusiastic home town. In 1951, the PCHS baseball team won the state championship; the basketball teams of 1964 and 1967 captured the state's top honors; the golf squad claimed the state crown this year, and Pekin's success in wrestling, football, cross country, swimming, tennis, and track competition has produced enviable records. Furthermore, many of the individuals from these teams have gone on to distinguish themselves in amateur athletics on a college level. There are far too many talented young people to mention here, but Don Millard, who captured the NCAA Wrestling Championship for Southern Illinois University in 1964, might be said to epitomize their success.

Part of the school's athletic success is attributable to its coaches, including A. G. ("Frenchy") Haussler, Jim Lewis (both in football), and Dawdy Hawkins (recently retired basketball mentor). Haussler wrote his master's thesis for New York University while coaching at Pekin High School, and his "History of the Big 12" (considered the toughest conference in the state in its time) was published in state editions of the *Chicago Daily News*.

Pekin High School's first football game was played in 1899—against Bradley College from Peoria, and Pekin won. In the first years of competition, Pekin played several colleges; however, the most crushing defeat was suffered at the hands of Bloomington High School, which devastated Pekin 108-0!

Pekin's only professional football player, Hank Bruder, began his memorable football career in the late 1920's playing for PCHS, where he was an all-state running back. His college career at Northwestern University brought him further recognition; but, numerous injuries suffered during his high school and college football days earned him the nickname, "Hard Luck Hank." Bruder entered the professional league with the Green Bay Packers in the 1930's. One of the Packers' first great stars, Hank played with them for nine years, then played one year with the Pittsburgh Steelers before retiring to a business career.

Al and Italo Rossi also started as football players. Competing for Purdue University, they were the only brother/tackle combination in the Big Ten. While at Purdue, the Rossi brothers began their wrestling career, and in 1941 Italo won the Midwest AAU heavy-weight wrestling title. In 1946 Al Rossi gathered enough support in Pekin to hold a special election, by

which an ordinance was passed to allow professional wrestling to come to Pekin. Both brothers then wrestled professionally, Italo from 1946 to 1952 and Al from 1946 to 1958. The highlight of their career was a tag team match in Peoria with the well-known Zaharias brothers, who later became the world champions. Italo ended his professional wrestling career in 1957 to become a member of the State Athletic Commission, and Al retired in 1958.

Pekin competitors also claimed national recognition in the prize ring in the early years of the century when Kid Herman (Pekin's Herman "Weenie" Lohmann, brother to Martin Lohmann) was a constant challenger to the bantam-weight crown. The Kid fought three times against reigning champions, twice to "no decision" finishes. He fought 47 times from January 1, 1912, to November 9, 1915, without a loss. Stanley Everett's also faced championship competition, and in the light-weight ranks, Harry Donahue climbed to the top and faced the late, great Rocky McFarland, rated by many as the best of all time in that division.



Kid Herman, right, met Pete Herman on April 27, 1915, in Peoria. Pete, no relation to the Kid, went on to become world champion.

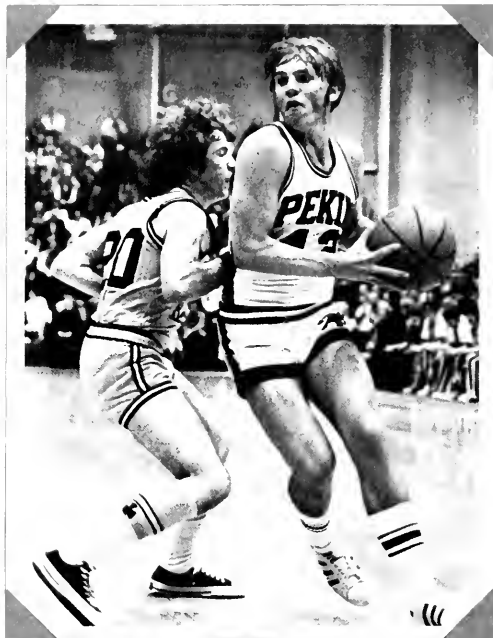
In 1911, Pekinites Joe Jenkins and C. Forsythe moved up from the Illinois-Missouri Baseball League to play for a brief time with the New York Giants, who won the National League championship that same year.



*The members of this Pekin I-M Illinois-Missouri League baseball team of 1909 played their games at a field on the near north side of Pekin between Capitol and Fourth Streets.*



*Today Pekin sports fans follow high school athletics closely, but there is no doubt in anyone's mind that in recent years basketball is the most popular.*



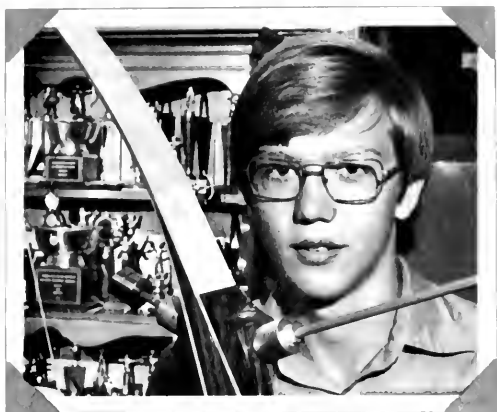
Although not a human athlete, "Dan Patch," one of the most famous pieces in the history of harness racing certainly made a place for himself in Pekin's sports history. He was owned by Dan Sapp and raised on a farm just outside of town on Broadway Road. Foaled in 1896, "Dan Patch" never lost a race in his distinguished career. He broke two minutes 50 times,

and retired in 1909 with nine world records.

In recent years, Pekin's most outstanding individual sportsman would have to be Mike Flier, a young archer. Introduced to the sport at the age of 12 when he enrolled in the Pekin Park District's archery program, Mike won his first major championship only three years later, competing in the Young Adult Divi-



sion of the 1970 National Archery Championship. In 1971, 1972, and 1973, Mike won the National Championship, Men's Division. One of only two Americans entered in the 1973 world competition in England, he then won the World Archery Bare Bow Championship out of a field of 250, that same year Flier was named Tri-County Sportsman of the Year, the first archer so recognized in this area. President of the Pekin Archery Club, Mike has now been shooting for seven years and is presently training for the 1976 Olympics to be held in Montreal, Canada.



Mike Flier

The city is also the home of some outstanding amateur athletic teams, the most notable of which may very well be the Pekin Lettes, a women's softball team (formerly known as the Caterpillar Dieselettes) which has made Pekin its home base since 1959. Supported by enthusiastic boosters from the entire Central Illinois area, the Lettes have played in several World Softball Tournaments, making it to fourth place in 1960, fifth place in 1961, and third place in 1965. The World Softball Tournament changed its name in 1965 to the United States Softball Tournament, and the Lettes won fifth place in 1970. The Lettes have won ten regional (Wisconsin, Indiana, Kentucky, and Illinois) tournaments, and won the 25-team Houston Invitational Tournament in 1965. Six Pekin Lettes members have been inducted into the Illinois State Hall of Fame, and Carolyn Thome Hart was similarly honored by the National Amateur Softball Association Hall of Fame.



The Pekin Lettes in action

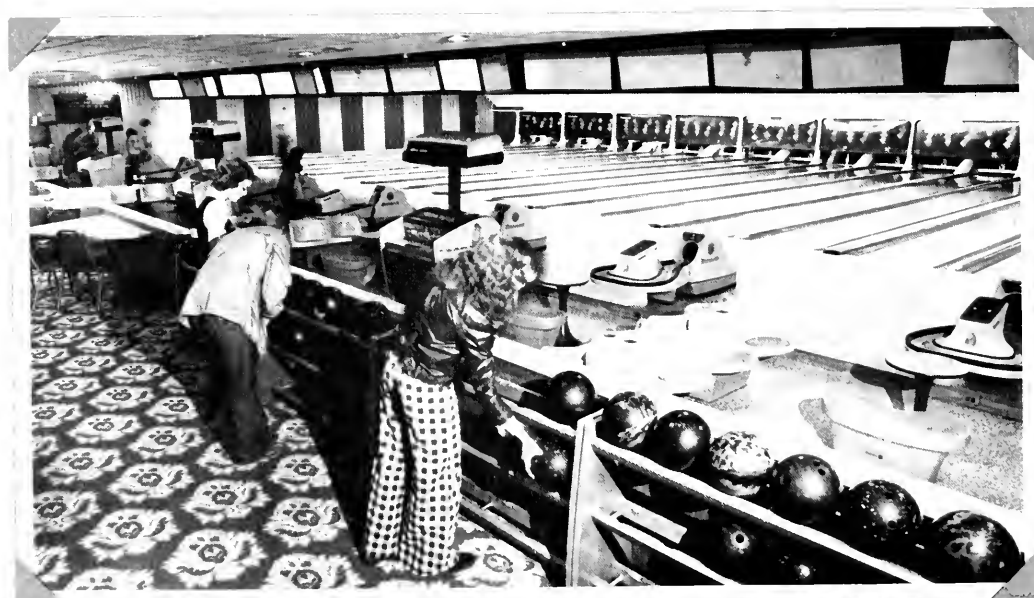
Area sports fans welcomed the formation of a hockey program in Pekin, and with their support it has grown to include children from elementary through high-school age; in fact, the "Midgets" boys 14-16 won the Illinois State Midget Juvenile Tournament in 1973. The men's team, the Pekin Stars, was organized in 1965 and captured the state amateur hockey title in 1967. Throughout the winter months, these teams provide exciting entertainment in Pekin's Memorial Arena.

Nationwide recognition came to Pekin in August, 1967, when the Ladies' Professional Golf Association selected the Pekin Country Club Golf Course for the Women's Western Open Golf Championship. One of the finest golf courses in Illinois, the Country Club course was selected by the United States Golf Association in 1966 as one of the 200 most difficult golf courses in the United States.

In addition to the myriad recreational opportunities available to area residents through the city's school and parks, there are also a number of commercial facilities. Pekin's bowling alleys have very active leagues; in fact, the city was once noted for having the highest per capita of bowlers of any town in the United States. There are also pool and billiard halls, exercise parlors, private golf courses and swimming pools, archery ranges, skeet-shooting clubs, and cycle trails. Furthermore, various commercial enterprises offer lessons in everything from arts and crafts through karate to recreational airplane flying. And to relax and unwind from traveling all the time, there is always fishing or boating on the Illinois River.



Hockey is an extremely popular sport in the Lehigh Valley.



Lehigh Valley is a great place to enjoy a game of bowling.

## PEKIN CLUBS AND ORGANIZATIONS

The city of Pekin is rich in both service and social organizations, nearly all of which have made substantial contributions to the community, culturally, spiritually, and/or socially. But once again we are plagued by lack of space, and so we have been forced to resort to listing most of the city's clubs after mentioning some information about the older and larger organizations. Let it be clearly understood, though, that each of the organizations listed herein is an important asset to our community.

The city's oldest organizations of any kind, in any category, are two fraternal ones: Mason Empire Lodge #29 organized in 1845, and the Mason Empire Lodge #126 instituted in 1853.

The year 1889 marked the founding of the women's Relief Corps, Johanna Post #236, an auxiliary to the Grand Army of the Republic, and the oldest women's organization in Pekin. Having reached a peak of 220-250 members in the 1940's, present membership totals 52. The Women's Relief Corps is responsible for the installation of the original GAR monument at Lakeside Cemetery, and twice a year its members place flowers on the monument and flags in the cemetery. They also make seat covers and bags for wheelchairs in veterans' hospitals. Through its department organization, the corps sponsors child welfare, veterans, and drug programs. Recently, this organization sent 1,000 paperback books to the Quincy Soldiers' and Sailors' Homes.

The Pekin Chamber of Commerce is not only one of the oldest, but also one of the most influential of the city's organizations. It got its start almost 85 years ago, when a group of civic-minded men banded together as the Citizens Improvement Association, whose goal was to secure new industries for Pekin. Everett Wilson was president of the group. In 1904, under the leadership of E. L. Conklin, the association changed its name to the Pekin Commercial Club, and this name was retained for a larger group formed in 1911 through a merger with the Retail Merchants Association, a group that had been organized in 1900 to promote better business practices and systems. This new group reorganized in April, 1916, as the Pekin Association of Commerce, with William E. Schurman, president; Phil H. Sipple, association secretary (a title that has since been changed to manager); and Miss Maude M. Smith, assistant secretary (assistant manager), a position she held until 1960. The name changed once again in 1962 from Association of Commerce to Chamber of Commerce.

Since 1949 A. W. Larter, Robert L. Endley, Paul Burkhardt, and R. H. "Bud" More have held the position of manager. More, a local businessman, served a tenure of eight years. The title is presently held by Lee S. Williams. Mrs. Merle Westrope, who replaced Miss Smith, has been assistant manager since 1960.

In November, 1965, the office moved from 29 South Capitol to 319 Court Street, the former home of the American Savings and Loan. Present officers are Ralph Brower in his third year as president, Charles Wolfe and Dale Adolf, vice presidents, and Edmund Kempt in his 42nd year as treasurer. The 755 members representing 690 different firms continually work toward improving the quality of life here, sponsoring innumerable projects ranging from Pekin river front redevelopment through the annual Fourth of July celebration.

The first of Pekin's "country clubs" was incorporated on March 25, 1916, as the Pekin Country Club by H. G. Herget, Ben P. Schenck, and William S. Pretzman, who was the first president. Other directors were John Fitzgerald, H. W. Hippen, D. H. Jansen, Franklin L. Velde, George P. Kroll, C. G. Herget and V. P. Turner. Total membership was 98.

On April 1 of the same year, 60 acres was purchased from the Lemuel Allen estate on the East Bluff for \$15,000. The farm house which occupied the original site at the time of purchase was remodeled into the club house. This was remodeled many times over the years and in 1955, a swimming pool and pro shop were added. Additional land purchases were made in 1928 and 1952, totaling approximately 95 acres by 1960, on which the club maintained a nine-hole golf course for use by its 300 members. This property was sold by condemnation to the Pekin Community High School, and the East Campus was later built on the site, but before the club moved, many notable social and golf events took place, including a golf match in which professional golfer Sam Snead played within two strokes of the course record—a 66 with a two-stroke penalty.

The club's new location was determined when Thomas H. Harris, realtor and developer, "sold" 150 acres just outside of town off Broadway Road to the club for \$1.00 an acre on the condition that the property be used for a new country club and golf course. The conditions were met, and the new location opened in 1961. A year later, the golf course was expanded from nine to 18 holes. Gene Sangalli is currently president of the 400-member organization.

A similar project, the 80-acre Sunset Hills Golf and Swim Club was completed in 1964 by Bob Monge. The club is run by a Board of Advisors selected from

the membership (presently totaling 473). Jimm Schwartz has served as president ever since the Board was organized in 1966.

The city boasts a very large number of service, philanthropic, and fraternal groups. One of the older of these is the Pekin Women's Club, organized in 1892 as the Columbian Club "to study objects and countries in connection with the 1893 Chicago World's Fair"; however, in October of 1893, the group decided to make their purpose a literary one and

changed the name to the Pekin Women's Club, with Mrs. W. G. Bailey as the first president. Mrs. Virginia Sams currently presides over the 215 members, who today provide funds for scholarships, city beautification, financial aid to other community organizations (such as the Tazewell Youth Center) and other projects.

Two service organizations, Pekin Rotary and Kiwanis clubs, share the distinction of being the "oldest" nationally affiliated groups. The largest such



*The elegant clubhouse and dining room of the Pekin Country Club (above) and a similar facility at Sunset Hills Golf and Swim Club (below) provide Pekinites with many enjoyable leisure hours.*



organization is the Young Women's Christian Association with 2,517 members.

A number of veterans' organizations were formed after World War I. The Veterans of Foreign Wars is exclusively for servicemen who served on foreign soil, and the local Roy L. King Post is named in honor of the first Pekinite killed in World War I. The American Legion William Schacter Post 44, organized in 1919, also commemorates a victim of World War I. Following World War II, the Tobin-Nammiga Detachment of the Marine Corps League was formed in honor of the two Pekin boys who lost their lives at

Pearl Harbor. Other veterans' organizations include Disabled American Veterans, George F. Bush Post #50, Lazewell County Vulture 1170, Pekin Veterans Council, and a number of women's auxiliaries, such as the Mothers, Waves, and Sisters of Service Men and Women.

From this point on, Pekin's organizations will simply be listed categorically. Some of their contributions to the community have been recorded elsewhere in this book, but no amount of coverage could adequately acknowledge the important role they play.

### *Business*

American Business Club  
American Business Women's Association  
Business and Professional Women's Club  
Downtown Businessmen's Association  
Pekin Board of Realtors  
Pekin Federated Business and Professional Women's Club  
Pekin New Car Dealers Association  
Pekin Traffic Club  
Southside Businessmen's Association  
Tazewell County Legal Secretaries' Association

### *Fraternal*

B. P. O. Elks  
Eagles Auxiliary  
Eastern Star  
Fraternal Order, Eagles  
Irm Grotto  
Job's Daughters (for girls)  
Kings Daughters & Sons  
Knights of Columbus  
Knights of Pythias  
Loyal Order of Moose  
Mason Empire Lodge #29  
Mason Empire Lodge #126  
Order of De Molay (for boys)  
Pekin Emblem Club  
Pocahontas  
Pythian Sisters  
Rebekah Lodge  
Royal Arch Masons  
Royal Neighbors of America  
White Shrine of Jerusalem  
Women of the Moose

### *Organizations of the Arts*

Pekin Civic Chorus  
Pekin Community Concerts  
Pekin Municipal Band  
Pekin Palette Club  
Pekin Players  
S. P. E. B. S. Q. S. A. (Pekin barbershoppers)  
Sweet Adelines, Inc.

### *Political*

Pekin Township Democratic Club  
Republican Club  
Tazewell County Democratic Central Committee  
Tazewell County Republican Central Committee

### *Professional*

American Association of University Women  
Education Association of Pekin  
Letter Carriers  
Pekin Registered Nurses Club  
Pekin Teachers Alliance  
Tazewell County Bar Association  
Tazewell County Medical Society  
Tazewell Medical Assistants Association  
Tazewell Numismatic Society

### *Service*

Altrusa Club of Pekin  
Boys' Club of Pekin  
Boy Scouts of America  
Chamber of Commerce  
Cosmopolitan Club  
4-H  
Girl Scouts, Kickapoo Council  
Hoe and Hope Garden Club  
Jay-C-Fites  
Kiwanis Club of Pekin  
Optimist Club of Pekin  
P. C. H. S. Alumni Association  
Pekin Junior Chamber of Commerce  
Pekin Junior Women's Club  
Pekin Lions Club  
Pekin Memorial Hospital Auxiliary  
Pekin Memorial Hospital League  
Pekin Women's Club  
P. E. O. Sisterhood  
Pilot Club of Pekin  
Rotary Club of Pekin  
Tazewell Animal Protective Society

### *Social Agencies*

American Red Cross  
Illinois Valley Lung Association  
March of Dimes  
Tazewell County Heart Association  
Pekin United Way  
Tazewell Council of Social Agencies

### *Social Organizations*

Circle Eight Square Dance Club  
Golden Age Friendship Club  
Mother of Twins Club  
Parents Without Partners  
Pekin Garden Club  
Pekin Newcomers Club  
Tazewell Toastmasters  
Welcome Wagon  
Y-Teens

### *Sororities*

Alpha Delta Kappa  
Beta Sigma Phi  
Delphi International  
Delta Kappa Gamma  
Delta Theta Tau  
Sigma Alpha  
Xi Gamma Psi

### *Sports*

Boating Belles  
Illinois Valley Parachute Club  
Parkview Women's Golf Association  
Pekin Archery Club  
Pekin Boat Club  
Pekin Men's Bowling Association  
Pekin Tennis Club  
Pekin Women's Bowling Association

When they are not busy utilizing the numerous recreational facilities provided by the city's schools and parks, Pekinites occasionally take time out to observe someone else perform. The community is fortunate in having had a number of very talented "home town" performers, and entertainers have also been "imported" throughout the years. For the most part, Pekin audiences are very appreciative of efforts made to bring them enjoyment, but it is possible that occasionally a performer doesn't get quite the reception he feels he deserves. That was certainly the case in the following anecdote, recorded in an old city directory.

One of the noted events in the Town of Pekin in 1857, was an entertainment given by the noted Jeffersons—father, mother and son, Joseph—in the 'Yellow' school house, situated on the corner of Second and Susannah Streets, opposite the present St. Joseph's Catholic Church. The performance was frequently disturbed by a litter of pigs, which were in the habit of taking shelter under the building. Mrs. Jefferson, who was a talented singer, was so disturbed by their noise while attempting to sing 'Home, Sweet Home,' that she broke down and went off the stage weeping hysterically.

Fortunately, the telling and retelling of this tale did not daunt succeeding entertainers, and the city enjoyed the talents of an impressive array of individual performers. For example, Emil Neuhouse was known as the "king of the slack wire." Performing under the name, Frank La Mondue, he appeared before the crowned heads of Europe in the 1920's. Later, he returned to Pekin and bought the Columbia Hotel, then sold it and leased the Lazewell Hotel. He also served as Lazewell County Sheriff.

Another famous entertainer from Pekin was Walter Frederick "Frederick the Great" was a magician and illusionist whose last known vaudeville booking was the Virginian Theater in Chicago. He came home to Pekin, bought the Capitol Theater, and remodeled it. He ran pictures accompanied by a live orchestra and occasionally featured vaudeville acts. When "talkies" came in, he sold the theater to Anna Fluegel and her son, Willie.

Pekin also produced a number of other talents who deserve mention. Whistling Dick Charlton was "the best whistler in show business." Emma Loomis had the lead in "Chocolate Soldier," and Gus Talbot, under the stage name of Hitty La Grand, played the

claret and red coat in the Broadway Boogie Woogie Minstrels.

Show business and show people from Pekin cannot be mentioned without spotlighting the Cornelis, a well-known circus family. Vern "Toad" Cornelis, a juggler and an acrobat, performed on the clown feet, board and simple trapeze. He was probably most noted, though, for sliding down a taut rope on his head while some clown blowing a bugle. He and his wife, Edna, met while both were performing, and married in January of 1919. Their children also got into the act, performing head slides, head jumps, rope spinning, hand and head balances, and other acrobatic feats on various apparatus, such as teeter boards, unicycles, rolli bolly, etc. The Cornelis appeared in fairs, theaters, circuses, and local celebrations throughout the 1920's and 1930's, and some Pekinites remember being lucky enough to observe some of the family's backyard practice sessions. The sons—Leverett, Verniel, and Earl—and daughter, Zaza, continued to work with their father until the outbreak of World War II. Verniel, who is now 56 years old, is the only member of the family still performing, generally at universities throughout the country; however, he maintains a home in Pekin where he lives with his mother.

No chronicle of great entertainers from Pekin would be complete without the mention of Paul Zalzee, one of the most successful. Many Pekin entertainers eventually left show business and returned to Pekin in some other field, but Zalzee has made entertaining his life's work; and today, at 86, he is still performing.

His career started 70 years ago when he left Pekin with his father to join the Curry Howard Greater Minstrel Show. He changed his name from Salzee to Zalzee on the advice of his grandfather who contended that all great circus names were German and Zalzee sounded more Teutonic. Zalzee traveled with the minstrel show from 1904-1907, then played circuses and state fairs, and from 1922-1928 traveled cross country in vaudeville shows. He appeared playing musical bottles (allegedly one of the first to do so), bells, callopie pipes, aluminum harps, one-string fiddle, and drums, and he assumed the roles of juggler, clown, actor, and singer. When the occasion demanded it, he became a canvassman, sail maker, electrician, sign painter, bill poster, legal adviser, lithographer, and general agent. In short, he epitomized "Mr. Showbusiness."

From 1929-1934 Zalzee headed his own dramatic stock company, which traveled all over the country presenting plays in local opera houses. They played

the Illinois Hotel here in Pekin (Second and St. Mary Streets) for 23 weeks. General admission was a nickel, reserved seats a dime; the plays changed twice each week, and the house was packed each night.

Zallee also owned three circuses at one time or another and operated a medicine show for five years. His career spans our society's transition from tent shows and opera-house dramas to modern day theaters. He remains active as a juggler, clown, and musician, playing for a number of different community organizations every year.

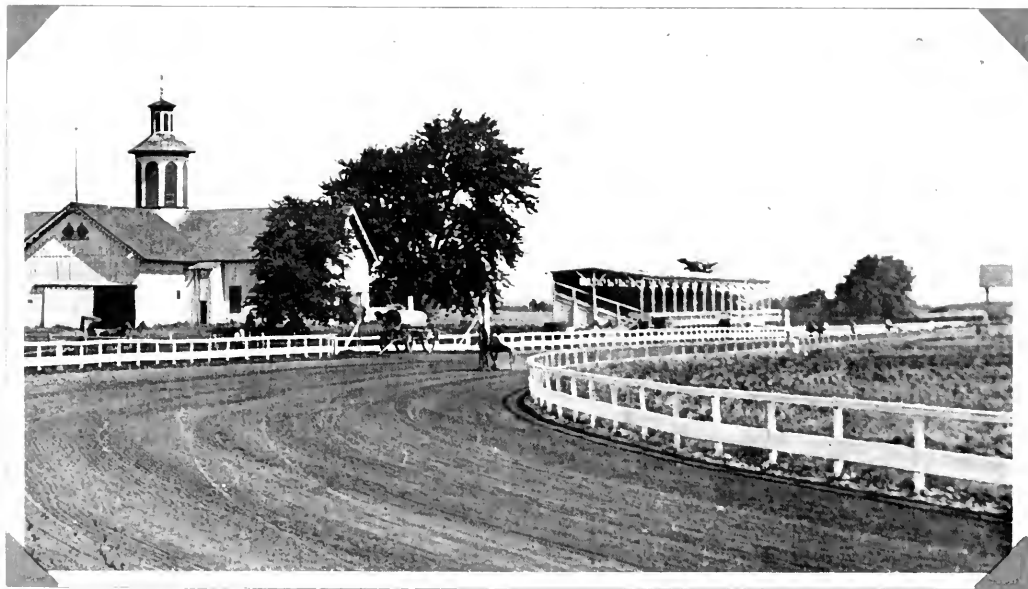
A glimpse into Paul Zallee's "Personal Notebook" gives us an idea of the "aura" of the times in which the entertainers mentioned so far performed. Every summer several circuses came to "Herget's Prairie" on South Eighth Street. Two show boats stopped at Pekin each summer, and the Fourth of July parade sponsored by local merchants featured horse-drawn floats. Great evenings were spent in Mineral Springs Park where there were free dances, trapeze acts, and band concerts by Gehrig's Band. On special occasions, families watched the balloon ascension. (They also spent a lot of time watching the balloon being filled up, as it took a full hour to inflate.)

Downtown Pekin was also alive with entertainment:

public dances at any of several lodges, shows at the Opera House, band concerts on the east side of the Court House by Bowers Military Band, ball games on the land where West Campus now stands, gambling in the old Empire Hall, or an excursion (there were two or three each week) on the Illinois River.

Racing fans enjoyed going to the Tazewell County Fair Grounds at 15th and Court Streets where races were held every year from July to September for approximately 25 years, until the track was moved to Delavan. Bookmakers waited in front of the grandstand for bets, and there was a 20' x 40' gambling tent. People came and stayed all day to see the world's fastest horses race on "Uncle Dan Sapp's Race Track," considered the fastest mile track in Illinois.

A much anticipated form of entertainment in Pekin's early years was the annual street fair. Although a county fair was held in Pekin as early as 1870, the street fairs originated in Germany and did not come to the United States until 1893. They were moved from the old fairgrounds to the streets of downtown Pekin where merchants erected elaborate booths to display their merchandise.



*Uncle Dan Sapp's race track*



The first street fair was held in 1898 with William J. Gonzelman serving as chairman of the planning committee and John Shade as secretary. The fair opened on Wednesday, October 12, with a mass of flags and bunting decorating Pekin's business section. Eighty booths were displayed in the center of the street. The principal event was a flower parade and was reported to have been one of the most exquisitely beautiful spectacles ever seen in Central Illinois.

The success of the first fair stimulated a second street fair for October 11-14, 1899. A committee was appointed in August and by September 12, Adolph Ehrman reported that \$2,432.50 had been subscribed. An 18-page program for the second annual Pekin street fair mentions dancers, singers, acrobats, bands, and tree shows from 16 or more elevated platforms. One of the principal features of the second fair was a contest for carnival queen. Blank ballots were printed by each county newspaper and sold at 5¢ a vote. A total of 4,901 votes were cast and netted \$245.05, which was to be used to help organize the queens



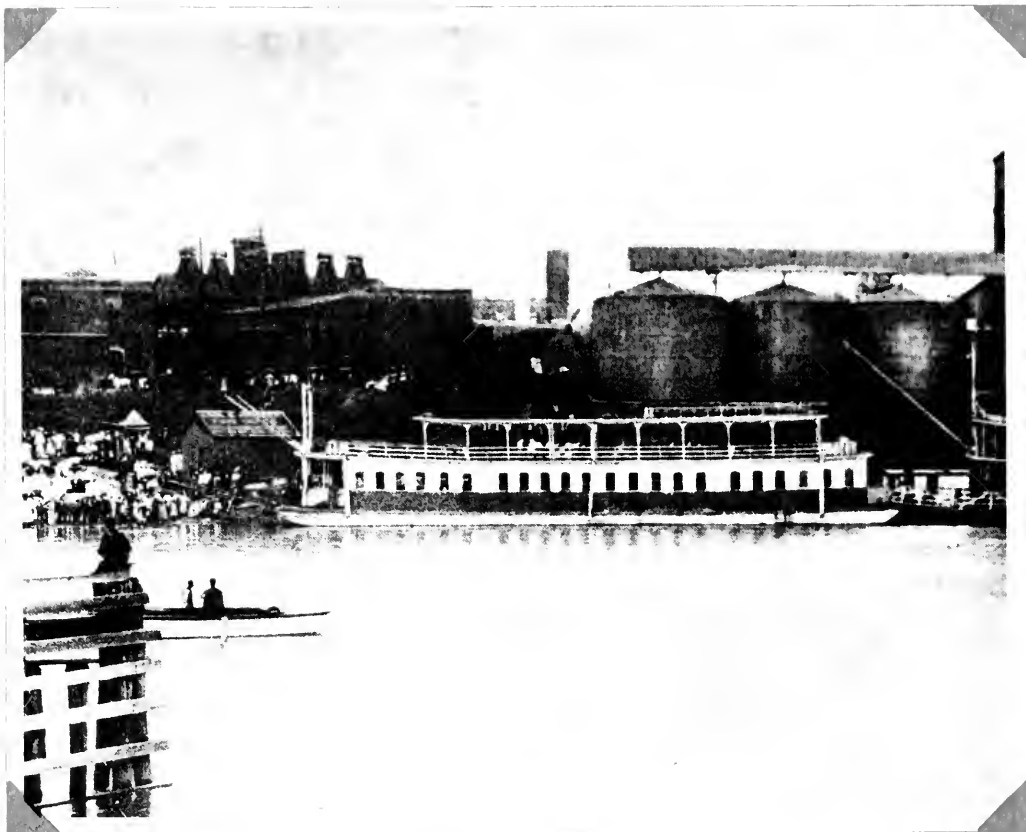
*Pekin's first street fair in 1898*

float. Essie Davies was chosen to float the float.

The second street fair was most successful. About 1,000 people were brought to Pekin by the Illinois Central Railroad, and at least 2,000 people were



*Pekin held its first Centennial celebration in 1924, then, in 1949 another one was organized.*



*Riverboat excursions were once an extremely popular Pekin pastime*

present from Peoria. Railroads offered lower rates to fair visitors and every car on the Terminal would pass people at every street crossing looking for passage. It is estimated that the crowd numbered from 18,000 to 25,000.

As a result of the success of these first two fairs, a Street Fair Association was formed. Thomas Cooper was elected president, and the executive committee consisted of W. J. Conzelman, Charles Duisdicker, C. G. Hergert, George Ehrlicher, E. W. Wilson, F. R. Peyton, L. Kraeger, and A. H. Albertsen.

The third street fair opened on Wednesday, October 15, 1902, with a number of free shows. The principal attraction was a baby flower parade held on the second day of the fair, which attracted a record

crowd of 12,000 Peoria people in attendance. The parade of children consisted of little girls between the ages of five and seven, and boys from five to 10 years old. Helen Koch's name was drawn from a hat containing 15 names, and she served as queen of the parade. She was the parade's center of attraction and rode in a golden chariot drawn by 60 little boys and girls all dressed in white.

A third parade was held on Friday in which about 1,000 members of different labor unions marched, but the highlight of the day was a wedding at the Court House bandstand, in which two Blacks, Howard J. Oliver and Miss Cora Hoy were united. "It is probably true that no greater assembly ever saw a wedding ceremony in Central Illinois than the one which wit-

nished this marriage." The groom had served in the United States Regular Army for six years and had been stationed at El Cane, his regiment had relieved Roosevelt's "Rough Riders" at San Juan, during the Spanish American War, and he was one of only six survivors of his company. President Cooper served as master of ceremonies and best man.

A fourth street fair was held from October 7-10, 1903. The largest day of the fair was Thursday and featured a baby parade. The association presented the first and only award for farm products.

Each of the street fairs featured a spirituous closing on Saturday night. Both young and old engaged in the mirth and fun-making which often became so boisterous that timid people were afraid to venture upon the streets "... The motto seemed to be that anything not actually criminal had 'right of way'." But all good things come to an end, and the street fairs were discontinued in the early 1900's, to be replaced in later years by homecoming festivals, watermelon festivals, and, beginning in 1972, the Marigold Festival.

Indoor public entertainment in the "good old days" of Pekin's history seems to have been centered mainly around opera houses or halls, one of the earliest and most popular of which was the Old Empire Hall, located on the second floor of a building in the 200 block of Court Street. Although the exact date is indefinite, the Old Empire seems to have come into existence some time in the early 1850's, and to have been used for dances, shows, entertainments, and graduation exercises.



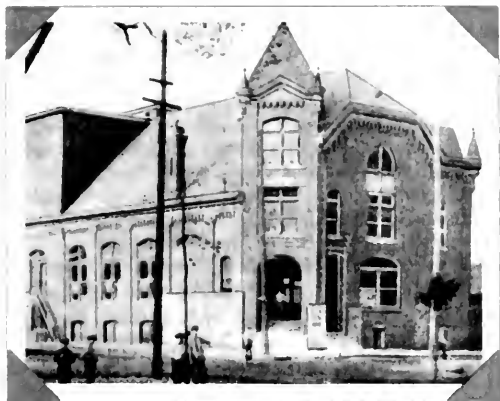
One of the popular shows held at the Opera House was the Pekin Elks Minstrels. This particular act was photographed in 1922.

The Turner Society, a German organization in Pekin's earlier days, also opened a hall for social-recreational purposes around 1867, when they purchased the Old Cincinnati School building on the southwest corner of Third and Franklin. In 1888, the Turners built a "grand new Opera House" on the corner of Capitol and Elizabeth Streets, and the popularity of the Old Empire declined in favor of the newer, more commodious quarters.

But about the turn of the century, with the organization in Pekin of a Y. M. C. A. (said to be an Americanization of the German Society), the Turners gradually passed out of existence, and the once-popular Opera House was converted into the Standard Theater with a seating capacity of 686. This was later remodeled into a motion picture theater and renamed the Capitol.

A big theater was started in the Arcade Building by James Edds, but soon after the stage concrete was poured, plans had to be changed due to miscalculations in the building plans. Later, the theater project was completely abandoned.

The transition from the opera houses to motion picture theaters as we know them today was provided by "electric theaters" (later known as the more familiar "nickelodeons") which first came to Pekin in 1906. The first of these was *The Dreamland*, built by a Parker Carnival man who wintered in Pekin and later owned by Ray Hively and then O. W. McClelland. Forn Bennett rebuilt it into the Rialto Theater, and, finally, it was operated by the Great States Theater chain out of Chicago until fire destroyed the building in the 1950's. *The Unique*, located in the North Room of the Arcade Building, was operated by Walter Friedrich and Bart Edds; it later became Walter Edds



The Opera House as it appeared in 1912

5¢ and 10¢ store. We call these nickelodeons "transitional" because they were not nearly as lavish as our comfortable, attractive theaters today. Patrons sat on collapsible chairs, facing a sheet draped at one end of the room opposite a projecting machine located in about the center of the room; its operator was mounted on a box. It was common practice for the machine to break down several times during every show, and spectators had to wait patiently while necessary repairs were made.

When the Stiles' opened the *Vaudette* at 24 South Fourth in the Zerwekh Building, the screen was located in the front of the theater and the projection booth was moved to a room in the rear of the building, much as theaters are arranged today. Then, the *Idle Hour* (1dylhour) was built by Don and O. W. McClelland in the old telephone building in the 400 block of Court Street. The last nickelodeon was the Court Theater, which was operated by Ellis Bostick, and then, later, by George Troughton, the Ingersals', and William Dittmer.

The Empire Theater at 327 Court Street was built by the Fluegel family in the 1920's. It was later operated by the Great States Theater chain of Chicago. The Fluegels also purchased the Capitol Theater from O. W. Frederick. It was razed and the present Pekin Theater at Elizabeth and Capitol Streets was built in 1928 for the sum of \$250,000.

In the 1950's two drive-in movie theaters were built. The Pekin Drive-In Theater, located on North Eighth, has since closed, but the Starlite Drive-In on Route 98 still provides nightly entertainment during the warmer months of the year.

The most recent addition to the community's theaters is Cinema I and II, erected in the Pekin Mall in 1974 by the General Cinema Company, a national theater chain. These two theaters in one building are indicative of the most recent trend in movie houses, discarding the elaborate and ornamental in favor of utilizing all available space. Shopping centers have become prime targets across the country for such endeavors. With much competition from television, the motion picture industry is experiencing "adjustment pains."

Much of the "atmosphere" for local entertainments throughout the years has been provided by Pekin's many fine bands. The first Pekin band was organized in 1865 by Edward Gehrig, Sr., a Civil War veteran and a renowned cigar maker. Before moving to Pekin, Gehrig had organized and directed Spencer's Military Band in Peoria, which was often hired to play at dances and other Pekin functions since there was no orchestra in the city. Finally, Pekin lured Gehrig

away from Peoria in 1865 to establish his cigar factory and, incidentally or not, a community band. In 1880 this band assumed the title of Gehrig's 7th Regimental Band. At the death of leader Gehrig in 1901, his son Charles assumed the role of conductor, serving for the next 20 years.

Several other bands also entertained Pekin residents. Rochrs and Dietrich Union Band was organized in 1870 and furnished music for various functions. The Pekin Opera House Band was then organized in 1885. Bauer's Military Band was organized in 1925 and, along with Gehrig's Band, entertained Pekinites weekly from the Court House bandstand. One band would play on Tuesday evenings, the other on Thursdays, and great crowds attended both concerts. Two additional Pekin bands included Peobel's Band, directed by Francis Peobel, and another directed by Hal Jones. All combined to form the Pekin Municipal Band in 1925 as a result of Illinois legislation allowing municipal bands to levy a tax for concerts.

Karl A. Zerwekh, L. C. Toel, and Dr. G. C. Cleveland were responsible for the incorporation of the Pekin Municipal Band in 1927, and Hal Jones became its conductor. Two of his more recent successors have been Harold Beach and, since 1960, Lawrence Fogelberg, who also directs the Pekin High School Bands. The band serves the community at public concerts during the summer and has occasionally marched in parades. Under Fogelberg's direction, the 50-piece group has added featured guest artists to the weekly Sunday evening program. The band also makes a number of special appearances at such places as the Pekin stadium for the annual Fourth of July celebration, Tazewell County Nursing Home, the 4-H Show, and, by invitation, in surrounding communities. Perhaps one of the organization's more unusual experiences was playing for a visiting Japanese women's softball team in the late 1960's. Protocol required that the Japanese National Anthem be played, of course, and at its conclusion, all band members were required to bow from the waist—try that with a tuba.

Besides the Municipal Band, there are a number of other local organizations dedicated to providing entertainment for their fellow Pekinites. Pekin has been fortunate in having two outstanding music teachers at their high school—Larry Fogelberg and Harry G. Langley—who have contributed greatly to the community's enjoyment of music. Fogelberg's Pekin High School Dance Band's professional sound is much sought after, and the Melody Maids, organized by Langley 26 years ago, performed for literally hundreds of functions throughout downstate Illinois, as well as appearing in Miami, New York City, and Chicago.

Since Langley's retirement, the Melody Mads have been combined with the Melody Men, a group he started in 1971, to form the Pekin High School Varsity Singers under the leadership of David Culross.

Langley has also distinguished himself outside the high school. In 1949 he organized the Pekin Barbershoppers, and since 1953 he has served as choral director for the Pekin Civic Chorus, these contributions, added to the fact that he has long been a choir director in Pekin's churches (at Grace Methodist since 1950) have made Harry G. Langley's name synonymous with good entertainment in Pekin for more than three decades.

Founded by Langley in 1949, the Society for the Preservation and Encouragement of Barbershop Quartet Singing in America received its international charter in 1950. Smith Applegate succeeded Langley as director, and he was followed by Jim Moses, whose name has come to mean "Mr. Barbershop" to many Pekinites. Under Moses' direction, the chorus won three International Championships, in 1959, 1963, and 1965. Today the all-male barbershop chorus is directed by Don Wilkinson, and a female counterpart, the Sweet Adelines, has also been performing for a number of years.

In the spring of 1947, the Pekin Community Concert Association organized for the purpose of securing outstanding talented artists to present a series of winter programs in Pekin. The first president, Mrs. O. W. Johnson, worked with Mr. Holtz, the New York representative, and Mrs. Barney Kahn, campaign manager, to bring these artists to the 1,000-member association. In the new F. M. Peterson Theatre there is no longer seating capacity for such a large membership, and there are 725 members at present, with Joseph Massing, president. The association has brought to Pekin such outstanding artists as the De Paure Infantry Chorus, Philadelphia Piano Quartet, Mata & Hari, Robert de Cormier, Guy Lombardo, the Great Stars of Jazz, and the Norman Luboff Choir.

In the fall of 1953 the Pekin Orchestra and Choral Society, Inc., was organized with these officers: Director of Chorus, Harry G. Langley; Director of Orchestra, Paul T. Wagner; President, Dale Sutton; Vice President, Mrs. John Kriegsmann; Recording Secretary, Mrs. Eileen Ozella; Corresponding Secretary, Mrs. Mildred Hummel, and Treasurer, Walter Meyer. After two years, the society disbanded as such, and the Pekin Civic Chorus continued on its own.

The Chorus' first production was Handel's *Messiah*, performed on December 6, 1953. It was followed by the *Elijah*, *St. Paul*, and *The Holy City*. Then a change in format brought *A Night With Rogers and*

*Hammerstein*, *One Hundred Years on Broadway*, *Sounds of Music* '61, *Showtime* '62, '64, '66, '69, '71, and '73. Norma Yock is currently president of the Pekin Civic Chorus, and *Showtime* '75 is already in the planning stages.

In 1955 the Pekin Junior Women's Club decided Pekin needed a theatrical group, so Doralma Lappi founded the "Lemonade Theater," which performed once each summer in the 4-H shelter in Pekin's Mineral Springs Park. After a few years, the group decided to produce more than the single show and in 1961 changed its name to Pekin Players, since "lemonade" was hardly a year-round idea. The Players put on five shows in the Washington Junior High School Auditorium during the winter, and continued using the 4-H shelter for summer performances until seven years ago. In 1966 a barn located a few miles outside of Pekin on South 14th Street was donated to the Players by Paul and Jean Schleder, and the Players moved in. Because the Barn had no heating equipment, the schedule was again changed, and now three shows are produced every summer. Some of the more successful productions at the Barn Theater include *Diary of Anne Frank*, *Cactus Flower*, *The Odd Couple*, *Barefoot in the Park*, and *Wait Until Dark*. The shows generally run for five nights, with approximately 500 people in attendance, although several productions have drawn 800 or more.



*The Pekin Players Barn Theatre*

Pekin High School drama productions. They also brought much enjoyment to home town crowds. Edith Harrod, former Pekin High School teacher, produced

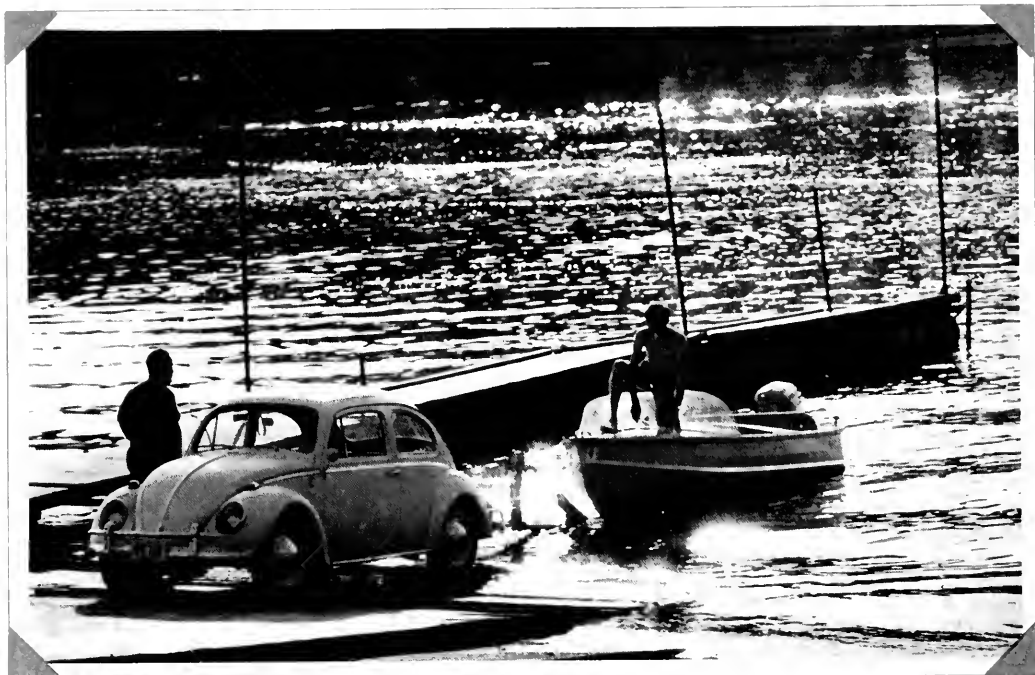
currently teaching at Illinois Central College, has a long list of outstanding high school performances to her credit. This year, Pekin High's drama and music department combined efforts to revive the performance of musicals, and over 2,300 people attended *Camelot*, making crystal clear the community's approval of the effort.

Pekin is home to a number of talented amateur artists as well as singers and actors. In an effort to promote their interests, the Pekin Palette Club was organized in June, 1958, in the Y. W. C. A. Building. The group sponsors two shows per year, open to both amateur and professional artists. Anyone may enter the spring show while the fall showing is limited to

Pekin Palette Club members. Alberta Zessin is president of the club, which is sponsored by the Veterans' Memorial Fair Association; showings are held in the Memorial Arena.

Pekin is also the home of Lester Chace, an artist nationally known for his mastery of portrait and landscape painting, accented by his affinity to browns. His work is well-known in New York and Washington, D. C., as well as throughout Illinois.

For a community its size, Pekin has an abundance of ways to spend leisure hours. Indeed, we are fortunate that so many have given (and are giving) of themselves to make the Celestial City a good place to live—and play.



*The river provides a never-ending source for recreation*

# // *Government*

It was by design, not accident, that the general topic of government was saved for the last major section of this book. One committee member suggested that we were saving the "juiciest" part for the end, we prefer to maintain, however, that we are merely keeping the format of this publication in line with the United States Constitution, i.e. separation of church and state.

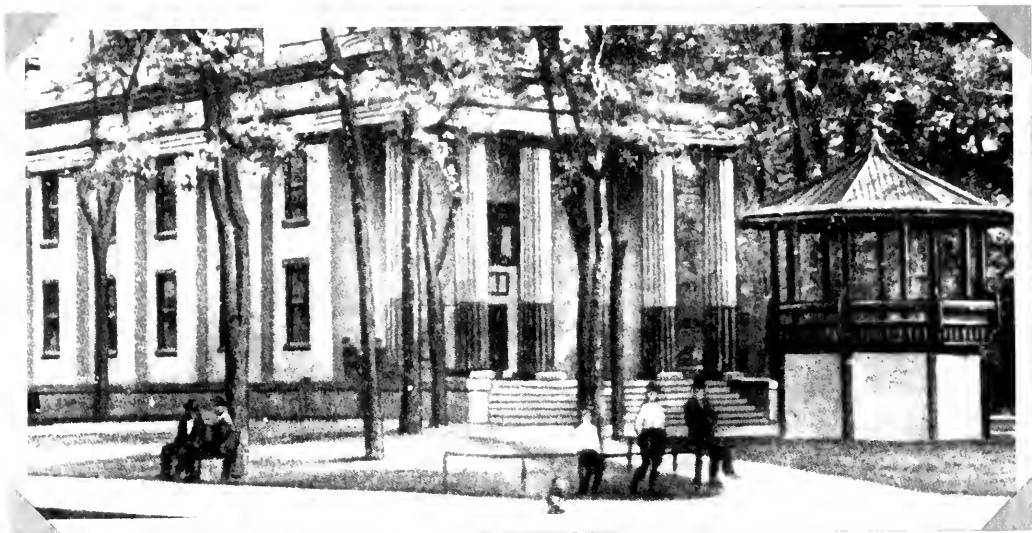
At the risk of repeating the introductory material of other sections in this book, it must be pointed out that any attempt at complete coverage of the topic in question would not only require several volumes of printed material, but ultimately be an experiment in futility, since, regardless of what various news media may say, we have yet to find what could be even loosely labeled as objective accounts of anything having to do with the social, economic, and political development of *any* community.

The primary concern of this unit is to discuss some specific events and time periods when government, in its own special multi-faceted way, existed either for the people or in spite of the people, depending on one's point of view. In doing this, a few of the citizens of Pekin whose names have come to be synonymous with government—from public servants such as policemen and firemen, through elected officials ranging from mayors through United States Senators—will be discussed. But many more will not be discussed, and any serious student of political science is cautioned against using this section as a source of complete information, and is urged to do further, more extensive research.

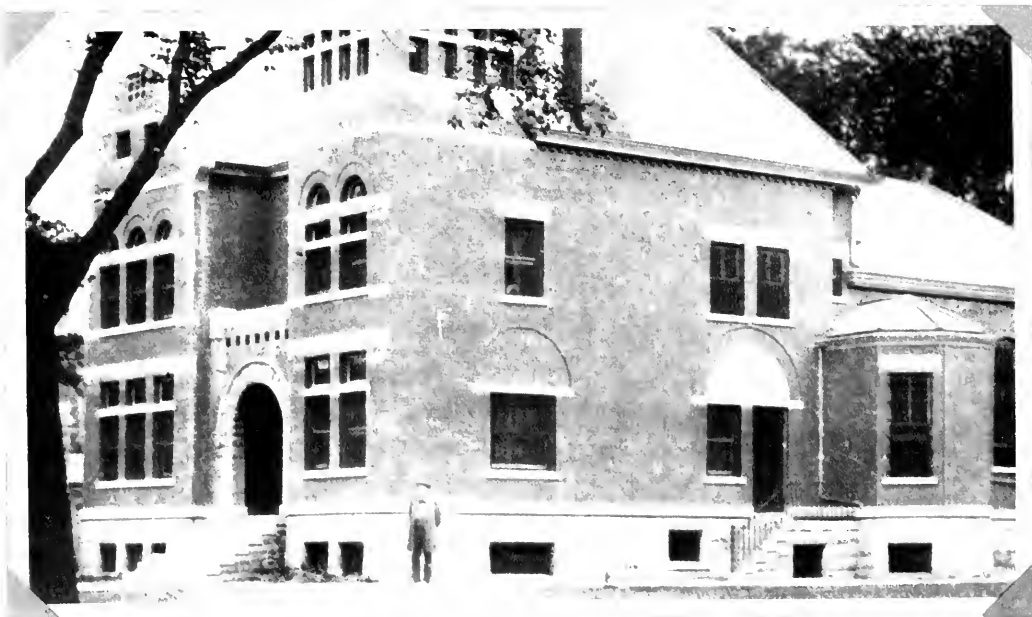
Since it is the city's, not the county's, history that we are considering in this publication, we will primarily limit our discussion to city government and Pekin events and people. However, we would be remiss if we did not point out that Pekin is the County Seat of Lazewell County (named after a Governor of Virginia), and give at least token explanation of how this came to be.

As was pointed out in the Overview, Pekin lost the County Seat to Tremont in 1837, having had it for six years after its move here from Mackinaw. Either shortly before or after Pekin's official incorporation as a "city" on August 21, 1849, the State Legislature returned the County Seat to Pekin, making the action "perpetual." There are varying accounts of just when this event took place, ranging from late 1848 to early 1850. At any rate, the move ended the long-running feud with Tremont over location of the county government, and a Grecian-style Court House was constructed on the site of the present structure (Court and Capitol Streets).

The funds for the erection of this building were contributed almost wholly by the citizens of Pekin. Records show that Gideon Rupert was the most liberal donor, subscribing \$600, David and Elphah Mark followed closely with donations of \$500 each. Total cost of the structure was \$8,000; many of the materials used in construction were local products, including sandstone for the foundation which was quarried about five miles northeast of Pekin and brick, which were made on the La Platte Bluff.



Another view of the building, showing the portico and the gazebo.



Another view of the building, showing the portico and the gazebo. This is the building which was used as quarters for the...





The County Court House in Kenosha, Wis., is a \$7 million job. A glimpse of the new building is shown at the top of the page. It holds some of the records of the County House and even of the County House.



Kenosha, Wis., is a city of 100,000 people. It is a city of 100,000 people. It is a city of 100,000 people.

A new County Court House, a \$7 million job, is being built in Kenosha, Wis. It is a city of 100,000 people. It is a city of 100,000 people. It is a city of 100,000 people.

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We want to focus now on the City of Pekin itself, considering along the way not only the political system and its varied functions, but also many of the sociological and economic trends that helped, it indeed not forced, government into some of the actions it took and policies it adopted. We begin with a discussion of the organizational form of our city government.

Immediately upon incorporation in 1849, Pekin's 1,500 residents (who, incidentally, lived in one of only 10 such incorporated cities in Illinois) adopted a Mayor/Alderman form of government. Four Wards were established, with specific boundaries and polling places for each. As was stated in the Overview, Bernard Bailey was elected the first mayor.

Only a year later, Pekin's population had increased by more than 20% to 1,840, many of the new arrivals being German immigrants. Bailey was re-elected Mayor (the terms then being one year) and all seemed to be going well. That did not last long, however, for on October 25, 1850, the City Council asked for Bailey's resignation, "that the city may elect a Mayor who will attend to the duties of his office."

Bailey complied, and shortly thereafter the Council adopted an ordinance which created a Fifth Ward. A special election was held on the 25th of November, in which A. Woolston was elected Mayor (a fact not noted on the list of Pekin mayors in the City Clerk's Office) and John Turner was voted in as the new Fifth Ward Alderman. In that year a city tax of 40¢ on the \$100 was levied.

The following year, James Harriott was elected Mayor, his salary was fixed at \$100 "as sufficient compensation" for his services. The yearly elections continued (although the Fifth Ward was abolished in 1855 and made part of the First) until 1875, when it was decided that two-year terms were in order. Eighteen elections were held in that fashion, with the last one on May 3, 1909.

The Aldermanic form of government was abandoned in favor of our present Commission form of government, four Commissioners elected from the city at large, and the term of office increased to four years with the election of May 1, 1911.

Many of the pre-1900 city elections were incredibly close, with the winner seldom beating his opponent by more than 50 or 60 votes. One of the closer (we believe the closest) was in 1864, when T. C. Reeves beat John Gridley by just 40 votes. Following is a complete list of the Mayors of this city, which you may want to use as reference in consideration of efforts to be discussed elsewhere in this section.

Mayors of the City of Pekin	Year(s) Elected
<i>Aldermanic Government - One Year Terms</i>	
Bailey, B. (Resigned)	1849-50
Woolston, A. (Special Election)	1850-51
Harriott, J.	1851-52
Tackaberry, M.	1853
Young, M. C.	1854-55
Wilkey, L. H.	1856
Tackaberry, M.	1857
Weyrich, P.	1858-59
Leonard, I. E.	1860-61
Prettyman, B. S.	1862
Barber, S. E.	1863
Reeves, T. C.	1864
Sellers, W. W.	1865-66
Cohenour, J.	1867
(Resigned 1/4/67 to State Legislature)	
Rupert, C. J. D. (Appointed)	1867-68
Edds, W. T.	1869
Thompson, D. T.	1870-71
Stoltz, J.	1872
Herget, J.	1873-74
<i>Aldermanic Government - Two Year Terms</i>	
Cummings, C. R.	1875-76
Sawyer, A. B.	1877-78
Hippen, H. W.	1879-80
Cooper, L.	1881-82; 83-84
Smith, J. L.	1885-86
Warren, A. R.	1887-88
Unland, F. F.	1889-90
Cooper, T.	1891-92
Wilson, E.	1893-94
Duisdieker, C.	1895-96
Sapp, D.	1897-98
Wilson, E. W.	1899-1900
Conzelman, W. J.	1901-02; 03-04
Sapp, D.	1905-07
Schnellbacher, H.	1907-09
Conzelman, W. J.	1909-11
<i>Commission Form of Government - Four Year Terms</i>	
Duisdieker, C.	1911-15
Schaefer, C.	1915-19
Schurman, W.	1919-23
Michael, B. F.	1923-27
Kimsey, L. B.	1927-31
Michael, B. F. (Died November 1931)	1931
Russell, R. I. (Appointed)	1931-35
Schurman, W.	1935-39
Shade, J. N. (Resigned April 1954)	1939-54
McGinty, J. J. (Appointed)	1954-55
Wolter, N. F.	1955-59
Shade, J. N. (Resigned October 1966)	1959-66
Waldmeyer, W. I.	1966-

Let us consider now, decade by decade, some of the major political, social, and economic events of Pekin's last 125 years. We will merely skim the surface, highlighting only the very important or the very unusual.

Probably the most important aspect of the 1850's was the immigration to Pekin by hordes of Germans. These hard working, thrifty newcomers came to play a major role in the development of our community. Such names as Herget, Jaecckel, Lantz, Reuling, Rupert, Unland, Velde, Vogelsang, Weyrich, and Zuckweiler began to make their presence felt. It was among many of the incoming Germans that the first indications of anti-slavery sentiment were exhibited, however, Pekin remained a basically pro-slavery community, with Stephen Douglas, not Abraham Lincoln, the local hero.

The city set out immediately in that decade for expansion and improvement. In April of 1851, the City Council awarded John Giblin a contract for grading a plank road across the river at a rate of 12½¢ per cubic yard. (The project was eventually completed in 1854 at a cost of \$32,000; it was a trail affair, seldom used, and what was left of it was torn down in 1867.) The city property in that year—1851—consisted of "fifteen padlocks, eight trace-chains, ten shovels, two mattocks, one plow, one scraper, one lantern, two buckets, eighteen tin cups, eight tin plates, one oil can, nine cots, twelve chairs, and four ladders." A year later this was increased by the purchase of a cart and two wheelbarrows.

Prohibition was a major topic of concern during this decade, with various attempts made at curbing the sale of liquor. For example, on March 6, 1854, a petition was presented to the City Council by the Ladies for the Suppression of the Liquor Traffic. On the 23rd of that month, the Council reported, in part, as follows: "That fully agreeing with your fair petitioners that the retail traffic in ardent spirits is generally evil, we recognize the present as a propitious moment for the enactment of an ordinance placing the grocery license at a *much higher* figure than was heretofore found expedient."

Taken legislation was passed off and on during this entire decade regarding prohibition, but the laws were either not enforced or soon resembled. Besides, the main political interest of the day was the securing of railroads for the growing city. Records indicate that the city subscribed much money to several would-be companies, and the decade ended with the first rails having been laid for the Illinois River Rail Road Company, a momentous event so far as the city officials were concerned.

By 1860, Pekin had grown to a whopping 5,025 residents, and boasted 742 houses, 49 stores, four hotels, 26 industries and workshops, half a dozen drug stores, and over \$2 million worth of taxable property. There were also a few schools, several churches, and about 25 saloons. The relative calm of the '50's proved to be the lull before the storm. "Violence," both natural and man-made, would have to be the epithet for the '60's.

The first major disaster of the 1860's was the fire on Court Street, which is discussed in the Catastrophes Unit. It is the repercussions of that event, however, that we want to consider now. The disaster created a fervor for the organization of fire companies in the city. Amid much buckering over recognition, three such companies were initiated. The Defiance Fire Company, the Independent Fire Company, and the Rescue Fire Company. Among them, their membership totaled more than 200 men.

The fire companies proved to be more social than protective, however, staging a grand parade annually and a victory party after every blaze. These victory parties were abetted by the fact that the City Council, in an effort to provide motivation, offered \$10 to the company that was first to reach a fire and douse it. With whiskey selling at 25¢ a gallon, the reward provided the conquering company with adequate funds to have a grand celebration.

Immediately, the city was visited by a record-breaking series of fires, many of which started in rather suspicious ways. It is believed that when a fire company would feel the need for a party, they would muster their men, line them up at the ropes of their engine, and open the door. Then they would send out a chosen member to start a fire, and wait for the alarm to come in. In this manner, the old companies reached fires in a remarkably short time.

Faced with this sort of practice, the City Council withdrew the \$10 bonus—it was, after all, getting expensive in more ways than one—and the number of fires was promptly reduced. In 1862 the city built its first fire station and began appointing fire chiefs (or chief engineers).

Violence of a much different nature affected Pekin on March 1, 1861. A man named John Ott, who axed to death a woman and her two small daughters near Delavan, was to be hanged for his brutal crime. A stockade was erected around the Court House square, to provide a private execution from the newly erected scaffold. Public outrage was running at a fever pitch, incited in part by plenty of liquor and a number of Delavan residents who apparently felt that anything short of a lynching would be too good for Ott.

Three companies of troops were hastily brought to Pekin from Peoria, under the command of the Adjutant-General himself. Martial law was declared, but despite these precautions, a group of self-appointed vigilantes managed to tear down the stockade walls about 6:00 that morning. The walls were hastily reassembled to make ready for the scheduled 11:00 execution.

A crowd estimated in various sources between 5,000 and 10,000 jammed the city's streets. Businessmen rented space on platforms built on their properties from which spectators could see over the stockade. Many of the curiosity-seekers held children high above their heads to let them watch Ott hang. Ott, reports indicate, remained calm throughout the entire affair, and just before falling through the trap of the scaffold declared that he alone was guilty of the crime for which he was about to die (a man named Green had been arrested also), that his doom was just, and that he hoped to be forgiven in Heaven, where he hoped to meet those who were there to witness his death.

He muttered a prayer as the trap fell; his neck was broken by the fall, but he hung for 19 minutes before being cut down and placed in a coffin. The crowd soon began to disperse, apparently satisfied, and there were no further incidents. Thus terminated the first legal execution in Tazewell County.

Two other major events of violence are discussed in the Catastrophes Unit: the Civil War and the Great Fire of 1860. We will not repeat discussion of them here, but it should be noted that they adequately fit the theme of "violence" which we have attached to this decade.

Two other murders took place in the 1860's, the first a single, unsolved crime and the second a crime of far greater magnitude with more social ramifications. On October 19, 1865, the body of a man was found in the Illinois River at Pekin. The head had been severed from the body, around which a quantity of iron was fastened. The corpse was not positively identified, but was believed to be one George Jackson, a well-known resident of the County who had been mysteriously absent for some weeks. The Mayor of Pekin offered a reward of \$500 for the apprehension of the murderer, but no leads were uncovered until 1866, when Jackson's wife went to England. Nearly the first person she met upon her arrival in Liverpool was her supposedly-murdered spouse. While the dead man was has never been determined, nor was anyone ever arrested for the crime.

Just as violence had ushered in the decade of the 60's, so violence ushered it out. On July 30, 1869, a

sheriff's posse attempted to serve a warrant on the so-called Berry Gang, a group of thieves and cutthroats who headquartered at Circleville (now defunct), about eight miles southeast of Pekin. This band of desperadoes had long terrorized the entire County. The sheriff's party was ambushed by the Berry Gang, and Deputy Sheriff Henry Pratt, a Civil War hero, was killed by Ike Berry. Jailor George Hinman was badly wounded, and Constable W. F. Copes came home with a bullet hole in his coat.

The arrival in Pekin of this posse caused great public indignation, and word of the ambush spread throughout the County. Immediately people began to gather, and a resolution was made to round up the gang once and for all.

As evidence of the boldness with which this outlaw band had been accustomed to operate, the very next day William Berry, the bandit's leader, appeared on the streets of Pekin with his customary swagger. His gang had committed other crimes, other murders, some more barbarous in that they included helpless children, and the townspeople had simply appeared more frightened each time he made his appearance.

But a limit had been reached. Where townspeople had previously vacated the sidewalk on which he walked, he was suddenly covered by a dozen guns in the hands of men he had always thought were afraid to lift a finger against him. The surprised Berry was hustled into the County Jail, and wide-spread searches began for other members of his dastardly band. Ike Berry was finally arrested in Bath, Mason County, several weeks later, and other Berry bandits were rounded up throughout the County.

William Berry, however, did not live long enough to know the final outcome of his gang, for on the very night of his arrest, several hundred men stormed the jail, overpowered the guards, crashed into the building, smashed down a series of iron doors, and finally forced open Berry's cell. They dragged Berry out, pounded him, shot him three times, took him outside, and hanged him from a tree in the Court House square. In the onslaught, Berry managed to get a knife, and three of his attackers were stabbed.

As for other members of the gang, all were subsequently captured, tried, and sentenced as follows: Ike Berry, life imprisonment; Robert Britton, 20 years; Emanuel Berry, 15 years; Matthew McFarland, 15 years; Cornelius Daily, 15 years. Simeon Berry was found "not guilty," and settled in Elm Grove Township. McFarland was pardoned in 1876, went out West, and was killed. Daily was also pardoned about the same time and disappeared.

A parting note on the decade under discussion

seems appropriate, so as not to leave readers with a totally gloomy view of the 1860's. It should be recorded that during this time span, much of the city government's attention was focused on acquiring more property (land) within the corporate limits and also investing in various railroad ventures to make Pekin a more accessible place. Also, the City Council, in 1869, appropriated \$1,500 for the building of a school on the East Bluff.

The 1870's brought a new kind of crime to Pekin—organized and politically endorsed crime. We allude to the "Whiskey Ring," a national issue of the Grant administration. Pekin, it seems, was a center for these bootlegging operations, which were headquartered in St. Louis. Because a heavy tax (\$2.00 per gallon, or eight times the former retail price) was levied on whiskey after the Civil War, operations were set up to bypass this tax by bootlegging liquor. The power of the ring was said to be tremendous, and something of its potency here is indicated by an incident in which a revenue man was arrested by local authorities and held in custody on a trumped-up charge while a boatload of whiskey was cleared off a dock and hidden away.

Six distilleries suddenly sprung up in Pekin in the late 1860's, and their popularity became understandable with the uncovering of the illegal distilling which was taking place. Officials were party to the secret alliances which made it possible for some whiskey makers to present false reports, with the effect of paying taxes on as little as one-third of their actual production. Many of the city cisterns built for fire protection were emptied of water and then refilled with highly flammable liquor instead. Fermented spirits were also casked in corn shocks, and kegs were sealed and sunk in the Illinois River. Hundreds of those kegs were recovered by federal agents during later dragging operations.

By 1874 public indignation had reached such a pitch that break-up of the ring finally came, with wholesale arrests all over the state. Pekin citizens at that time saw whole cartloads of prisoners hauled off to Federal Court in St. Louis. In truth, though, no one of real "importance" was ever sent to jail, as only a few lower-echelon ring members took the punishment, and the whole thing blew over. At any rate, the "Whiskey Ring" was broken, and the siphoning of millions of dollars from the U. S. Treasury into private hands was at least discontinued, although the money was never recovered.

During the period of the ring's exposure and final overthrow, the Germans came to a position of almost complete dominance of the political and economic af-

airs of the city. The 1871 City Council, for example, was made up of William Blankin, D. W. Understock, George Webber, Habbe Vekke, and John Wagenscheller. All but Blankin were Germans. In 1872 the Mayor was John Stoltz, in 1873 it was John Hettger.

The city government's principal contribution to progress had been the earlier subscription of \$400,000 for the building of the first railroad into the city, and in the '70's the debt in bonds had grown to \$175,000—most of it at 40 per cent interest. Normally, the Council would let the bonds go until they became due, and then float a new bond issue with which to pay off the old one. This procedure was repeated often, with special elections held twice a year on occasions. Ironically, there was a ceremonial burning of the old bonds each time, as if the debt had really been liquidated instead of just postponed.

Politics in city government was often the politics of privilege. When a new administration took office, it was customary for a complete turnover to be made, not only of city jobs, but also of city business. This was generally transferred to the business houses of the aldermen, and in some instances, when no alderman happened to be in the particular business of which the city required service, one of them got into that business temporarily.

The Mayor traditionally controlled the location of the police station and other city offices (there being no City Hall) and this was customarily on property owned by the Mayor, for which he proceeded to collect rents from the city. Also, city business was pretty much a closed proposition, with the Aldermen and Mayor doing business almost solely among themselves behind closed doors.

One area of progress should be noted. In 1874, the Council passed an ordinance which provided that all money collected from saloon licenses would be put into a special fund to be used exclusively for the "purchase or erection of parks, halls, cathouses, and cr.ime houses."

The juvenile problem of the day centered largely in the teens of the elders that the new "blue novels" were corrupting the youth. Citizens frowned on the ridiculous fiction which their children and teens were concerning flying machines, boats that could go under water, horseless carriages, and other fantasies, bound to have an ill effect on impressionable youngsters.

It was during the city's middle '70's that the town lost two of its leading citizens, one of whom died of tuberculosis, the other of cancer, both of them

which never healed. Both are worthy of brief mention here.

On December 8, 1872, the Honorable William Sellers, then editor of the *Republican*, died at a young 39. He was born in Pennsylvania, where he served a term in the State Legislature, and moved to Pekin in the fall of 1863. A virtual stranger, he was twice elected Mayor of Pekin in 1865 and 1866, resigning the latter post about mid-way through to serve in the Illinois General Assembly. At the time of his death, he was filling the position of Postmaster. Truly, he must have been a most remarkable young man.

The other loss was of a different nature. Columbus R. Cummings, heir to David Mark (listed as the most extensive land owner in Tazewell County at the time of his death), was a wealthy businessman and land-owner who was elected Mayor of this city in 1875-76. With due credit, during his administration Pekin paid off all bonds on the due date—a rare achievement in those days, as already indicated. However, when Cummings sought re-election, he was defeated by 33 votes in a hard-fought campaign against A. B. Sawyer.

Cummings became embittered, never again appeared at city hall, did not preside over the vote canvass, and shortly thereafter left Pekin and moved to Chicago. An Englishman in a predominantly German community, Cummings may have had other reasons for his dissatisfaction.

He became even wealthier after his move to Chicago, and both he and his descendants were quite philanthropic through the years, making sizeable endowments to many institutions. But nary a penny was given to Pekin, which paid handsomely for much of the land which later was purchased from the Cummings estate. Until quite recently, the Cummings estate, now known as the Adwell Corporation, still maintained an office in Pekin, but that has recently been moved to Jacksonville, Illinois.

In summary, the 1870's found Pekin changed from a typical frontier town to a virtually German community, whose only growth was from its newborn citizens. While surrounding cities entered their periods of greatest growth, Pekin seemed to be stagnating. People without some understanding of the German language found life difficult here, and very few stayed. Furthermore, the Old World crafts and trades that the Germans introduced—at first a great stimulus to business—were not geared toward mechanization, and the community exhibited a conservatism that kept its citizens sowing and harvesting their crops by hand and similarly producing their goods, long after

neighboring areas had advanced to more progressive methods.

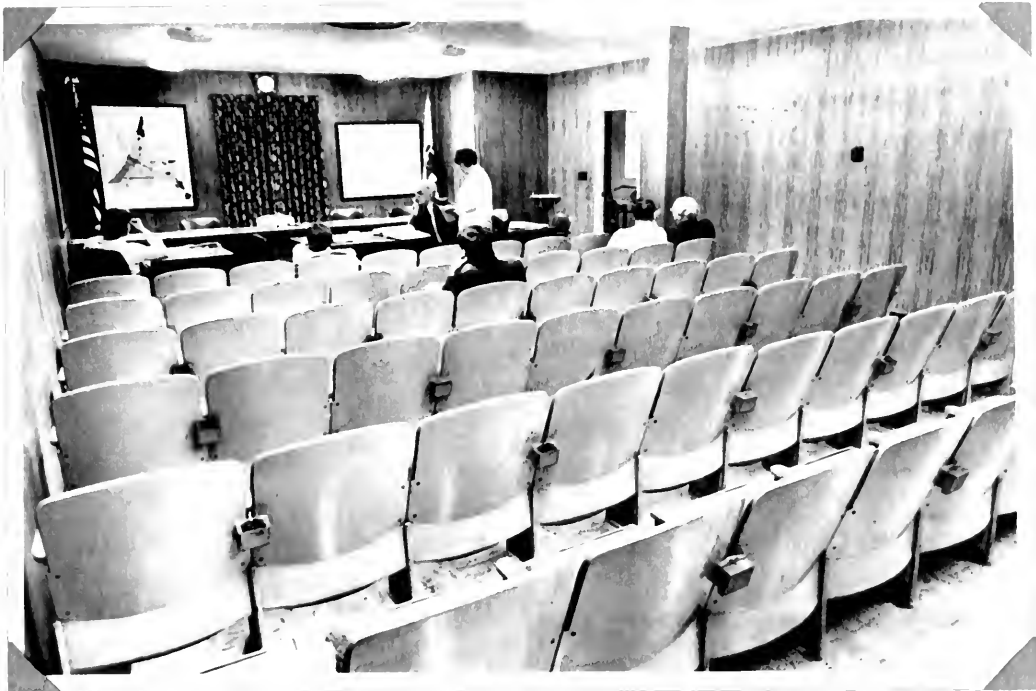
The 1880's, while not a period of growth for Pekin as far as population was concerned (the 1890 figure was 6,347—up only about 400), was a period of great progress and change. The city remained a strong Germanic community, but some new spirit was introduced, much of it coming from the administration of Mayor Thomas Cooper, a fire-eating Democrat who had the ability to push people “just far enough.” Cooper served four years as Mayor in the '80's, and was returned for another two in 1890.

Under Cooper, the first sewer was installed, the first curbs and gutters built, street signs were erected, and brick sidewalks were introduced. All of these developments are discussed elsewhere in this book. But the crowning achievement of Cooper's administration was the construction of the community's first City Hall. That structure, which was built on the site of the present City Hall, was completed in 1884 at a cost of \$6,500. It housed the city offices, council chambers, fire department, and police department. No bonds were issued; apparently the saloon license fund which had been set aside for that purpose was sufficient.

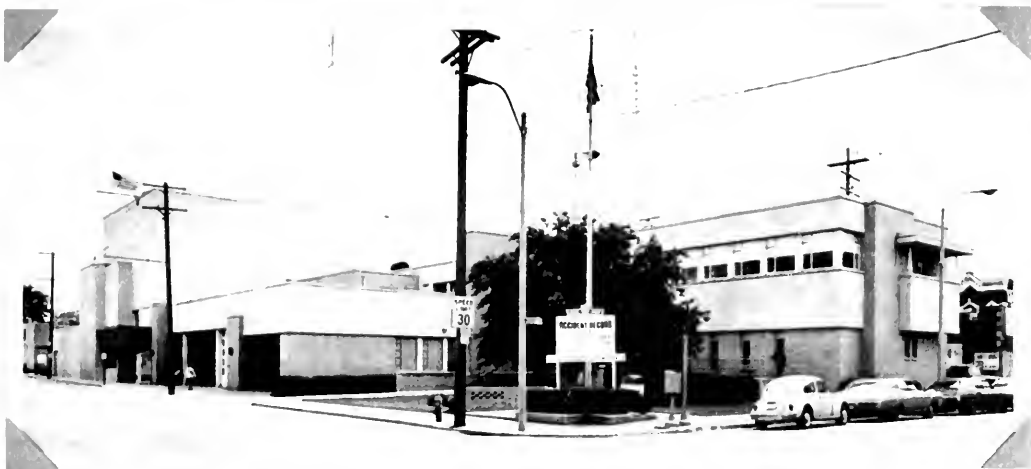
The old structure stood until the fall of 1951 (the last City Council meeting was held there September 15) at which time it was razed, as the present City Hall was completed. The current building was constructed around the old one, and City Clerk Bill Jansen recalls handing records, etc., through the windows of the old building into the new. (Someone may be in for a “pleasant” surprise when the cornerstone of this \$330,000 City Hall is finally opened, for one of the items sealed there on June 27, 1952 was a bottle of Bourbon Supreme from the American Distilling Company.)

On the heels of Cooper's tenure in office came many more city improvements, this time under Mayors Smith, Warren, and Unland. These included the first bridge at Pekin across the Illinois River, the first electric lights, the waterworks, mail delivery, and a public library. Surprisingly, it was during this period of heavy expenditures for public improvements that the first big inroads were made toward paying off the city's bonded indebtedness, as about \$50,000 was sliced off the tab. It should be noted here, too, that most of this progress was made during the years when Alderman John Shipper headed the Finance Committee.

The decade ended with a rousing political campaign on “free bridge and free cows.” The issue of



The new 100,000 dollar courtroom at the Federal Courthouse in San Francisco, designed by the architect, and the Court's chambers above, allow ample room for the modern structure of the Federal Courthouse.



The Federal Courthouse, San Francisco, California.

whether the new bridge was to remain a toll bridge or to be made free to the public was placed on the ballot along with the question of whether cows and other livestock were to be permitted to run loose on the streets. Some working people got quite excited, charging that fees for the use of the bridge, along with a denial of usage of the streets for their animals, amounted to legislating "the poor people" out of existence. The "free bridge" carried, while the "free cows" were forbidden. Oddly enough, the vote was almost identical (in reverse fashion) on the two issues.

One other person will be discussed here before moving on to the "Gay Nineties," although a case could well be made for including long-time Pekin Fire Chief Julius Jaeckel in any of five decades, for his tenure as Chief was 50 years (believed to be a United States record). But since his 58-year career began in 1881, and his appointment as Chief came in 1889, we have elected to include him here.

Jaeckel could well be said to epitomize that robust, dedicated, German spirit that is such an integral part of Pekin's history. He constantly strived for improvement, never satisfied when he knew that some better

technique existed for battling blazes and saving Pekin lives and property. He attended so many schools and fire-fighters conventions that it would literally require several pages just to list them.

Yet, despite his demands of excellence from both himself and his men, one would be hard pressed to find anyone who did not admire and respect him. Two brief anecdotes will give some insight into this most extraordinary man. In 1937 (two years before his retirement) Jaeckel was honored on the occasion of his 75th birthday, and he was asked about his most memorable experience as a fireman. "I've seen people killed time and time again. One explosion took 42 at a crack. But then those aren't the sort of things I like to remember. I like to remember the friends I've made on the way."

Did he ever really "retire?" In 1948, just a year before a stroke which ultimately claimed his life in early 1950, there was a major fire at the then-Farmers National Bank. The blaze broke out in the early morning hours, and threatened much of the downtown area. And who, at age 85, do you suppose was there, offering to be of whatever assistance he could? Right—Julius F. Jaeckel, only slightly slower and a bit grayer than when he started as an unpaid volunteer in 1881.

The "Gay Nineties" was a decade that could well be considered a study in contradictions for Pekin. The time period contained all of the elements of former decades thrown into one. It was a period of tremendous growth, as the population increased by more than 33% from 6,347 in 1890 to 8,420 in 1900. And it most certainly was "gay," in that much social activity was taking place, including the well-remembered contests at the harness-racing track, which was packed by hundreds weekly, the gala Thanksgiving dances at the Tazewell Club, and midnight excursion train trips to Chicago for Big Ten football games. Furthermore, educational progress occurred, with the completion of Garfield School in the summer of '94, and the passage of a city ordinance in 1896 establishing a free library.

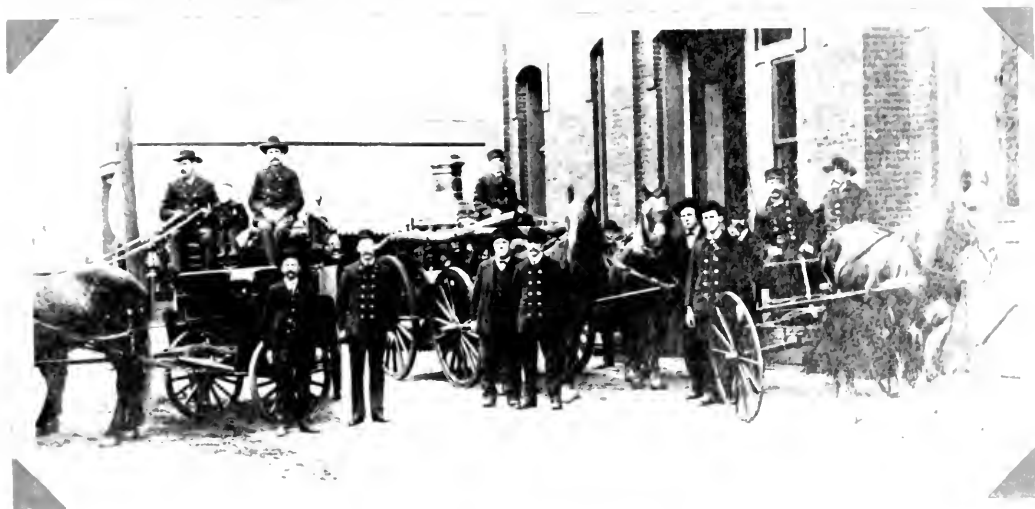
But there were also the tragedies, including a boat sinking, several fires, and the Spanish American War, all of which are discussed in the Catastrophies Unit. Further, despite all the social, educational, and religious growth, the 1890's still found Pekin with more than its share of violence, almost of a frontier nature.

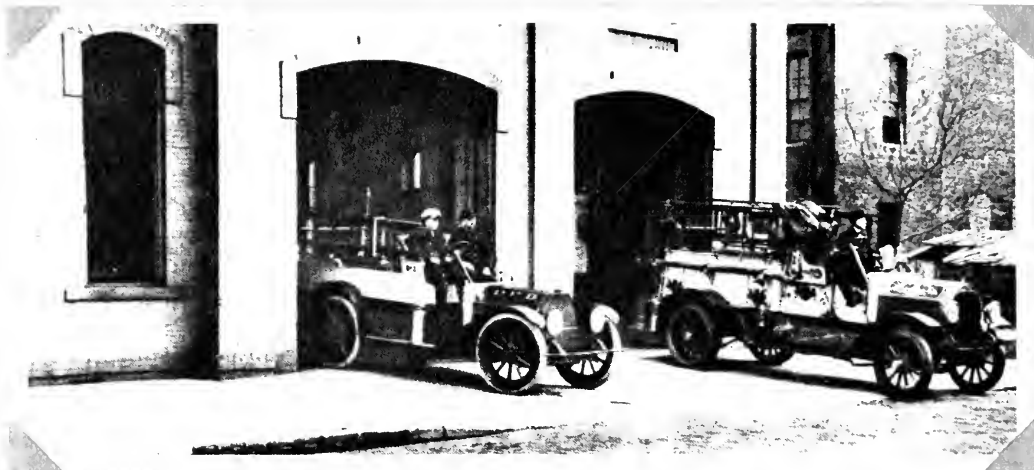
On June 6, 1894, occurred what was called at the time "the most serious riot in the history of Tazewell County." The Little Brothers operated a coal mine between Pekin and Croy. Clearly, Apparently, the



*Julius Jaeckel, Pekin Fire Chief for over 70 years*







*Left: The first fire truck in the city, built in 1872. Right: The second, built in 1882. The modern equipment of the city fire department.*



*Left: The first fire truck in the city, built in 1872. Right: The second, built in 1882. The modern equipment of the city fire department.*

owners installed electric drilling equipment, thus reducing the number of old-style operators needed by a ratio of four to one, resulting in the unemployment of many miners (who basically knew no other way to make a living). A band of these disgruntled miners, led by a John Gehr, stormed the mine; and in the ensuing bloody battle, one of the attackers was killed, as was one of the workers inside the mine. Many were injured, and the mine itself was burned to the ground.

Gehr was arrested at his home the next day, and ultimately sentenced to four years in prison; others involved received lesser jail terms. During the intense excitement immediately following the riot, threats were made by the rioters and their friends to march on the jail at Pekin and free their comrades. Martial law was declared in the city, and several companies of the Illinois National Guard encamped in the Court House square. No assault was ever made, many of the rioters having apparently realized the fruitlessness of their plans.

The year 1896 marked the last legal hanging in the city of Pekin. Albert Wallace of Delavan had shot-gunned to death his sister and also severely wounded her husband. Newspaper accounts of the day are quite colorful and, we fear, a bit exaggerated, but much notice was given to the fact that Wallace remained firm and unflustered throughout the entire event, remarking from the gallows only that someday "these people will be sorry for what they are doing."

If one reads enough of these accounts, he will find that the night before his execution Wallace became very agitated and violently ill. A doctor was summoned on at least three separate occasions, and each time he administered morphine to the condemned man. It is interesting to speculate just how much these drug injections had to do with Wallace's "firmness" in the face of death.

He was hanged at 11:10 a.m. on Saturday, March 14, while several thousand people milled around the walls of the stockade which had been built to keep all but official "ticket holders" from witnessing the execution. This neck was not broken in the fall, and it was not until 14 minutes later that he was pronounced dead—of strangulation.

And so the decade ended, characterized in part by saloon fights, gambling, and arrests for carrying concealed weapons, but also by progress in education, religion, and government. Most store windows bore signs assuring potential customers "German Spoken Here," yet, most of Pekin's 8,420 residents were now native Pekinites, born in its buildings, educated in its

schools and churches, and increasingly aware of the more social and sophisticated facets of community life. Indications were that Pekin was leaving behind it that "frontier, river town" image and preparing to meet the Twentieth Century head on.

The new century brought numerous changes to an ever-growing Pekin, many of which are chronicled in other sections of this book. In order to avoid repetition (and acknowledging the rapidly diminishing time and space available to this segment of our publication), we must be content to highlight only a few of the major trends and outstanding individuals who influenced our city's history from this point on.

Pekin began the 20th Century with a progressive bang by enacting an ordinance in 1902 which restricted the legal working day in the city to nine hours. This is believed to have been one of the first such pieces of legislation in the country. It should be noted that two "lobby" groups worked hard to bring this about: the Trades and Labor Assembly and the Citizens' Improvement Association.

The city government, as well as industry, was undergoing change. The number of Wards and Aldermen was constantly shifted and re-proportioned. For example, in 1908, Pekin had seven Wards, with two Aldermen elected from each one. This created a great deal of confusion and political power struggles, characterized at the time as the "war of the Wards." Again, public pressure demanded a remedy to the chaos, so that city government could settle down to handling the affairs of the city. As a result, the referendum which created our present system of Commissioners (previously discussed) was passed by a vote of 817 to 619. That may not seem like a great majority, but considering the fact that most of the people in political power at the time were opposed to the change, it was an overwhelming victory which clearly demonstrated that government must exist *for* the people—or at least give that appearance.

It was during this first decade, carried into the second of the 20th Century, that a sizable Italian colony began to develop here. Many of these new arrivals settled in the East Bluff area of town, and their presence and contributions to Pekin soon began to be felt, giving the city more of a cosmopolitan atmosphere than it had had before.

With the outbreak of World War I, the last vestige of Pekin as a "German" community went out, save for a few diehards; residents came to consider themselves Americans in general and Pekinites in particular. It was about this time, too, that Pekin began to assume a kind of civic pride (perhaps sometimes over

zealous) that has led the community forward for the last 50 years.

The "Roaring Twenties" brought plenty of action to Pekin's 12,000 plus residents. Besides such items as epidemics, school board fighting, bridge problems, and political squabbling over zoning—all of which are discussed elsewhere—there were two distinct aspects of this era worthy of mention: the Ku Klux Klan and the lawlessness associated with prohibition.

It would be misleading to state that the Ku Klux Klan did not exist in Pekin; in fact, it is fairly certain that Pekin was the headquarters for a Klan—to be precise, organization number 31 of the Realm of the Invisible Empire, whose Grand Titan, in 1924, was recorded as one O. W. Friedrich. Further, the Klan, for a time at least, had their Klavern located at the Old Pekin Roller Mills Plant. The group owned the *Pekin Daily Times* in the early '20's, and its meetings, policies, and plans were front page news, and its "good works" much praised.

In all fairness, though, it should be pointed out that the Klan was one of the leading social organizations of the day, and many people belonged in order to participate in the group's activities, much as one might today belong to some fraternal organization. There seems to have been a distinct inner circle, relatively small in number, and a larger, more social outer circle. Much more could be said, but it would serve no real use in this type of publication.

During the first 15 years of the Twentieth Century, major violence or crime was conspicuously absent, but the early Twenties changed all that. The first big event came in 1922 when a group of hijackers blasted their way through the main gate of the American Distilling Company and escaped with a carload of alcohol—on the day after Emil Neuhaus had been sworn in as Sheriff. There were a series of gun killings and armed robberies in downtown Pekin, frequent raids on "speakeasies," and recurrent charges of bribery against state and federal "dry agents," several of whom were held in the County Jail here for a while. Authorities at one time fought a pitched gun battle across Mineral Springs Park, covering an area from Court Street to the railroad tracks north of the park, against a gang hijacking a train. In 1924, the *Times* announced that Sheriff Neuhaus not only had an airplane standing by for use in tracing bootleggers and hijackers from the air, but was even considering the use of bombs.

Also in 1924, shots were fired into the homes of Pekin attorneys, W. J. Reardon and Jesse Black, both of whom were instrumental in the prosecution of sev-

eral prohibition-related cases. The City Council offered a \$1,000 reward for the arrest and conviction of the attackers, but the offer went unclaimed, despite the expenditure of more than \$5,000 for special detectives to run down the gunmen.

Several men were gunned down by police when they "resisted arrest," and the decade ended when one Fred Spencer hung himself in the County Jail while awaiting trial on charges that he had cut the throat of a man named Fred Wasmer at Washington. Again, more could be said, and more names mentioned, but, like so much of the material available from this period of time and the memories of some oldtimers who have a slight tendency to exaggerate when re-telling a story for the umpteenth time, the accuracy of the "facts" would be highly suspect.

Still, amid a backdrop of violence and crime which seems to crop up often in our history, Pekin experienced one of its greatest periods of growth during the 1920's. The bulk of our school system was built, the north side saw paved streets for the first time, the industrial and business communities expanded tremendously, and the population soared another 33% to over 16,000.

Before leaving the "Roaring Twenties," one prominent Pekinite must be mentioned, although, like others, he could well be brought up in any of the next several decades. But since it was 1922 that Martin Lohmann was first sent to the state legislature, this seems an appropriate place. Born in 1881 into a family of ten, Lohmann received formal education only to the age of 11. Initially a butcher by trade, he also worked as a grocery boy, automobile salesman, and, most notably, a real estate and insurance broker, which he remains to this day.

It was 1908 when Lohmann got his first taste of politics. He was elected an Alderman from Pekin's Fourth Ward by one vote. He ran on a "sidewalk platform," promising to install sidewalks on the then-north side, which included Highland and Royal Avenues. He did, and the sidewalks remain yet today. Four years later, "Marty" became City Clerk, and later served Pekin even further as a Justice of the Peace and as a City Commissioner.

His 30-year career in Springfield, however, is what he is best known for, and deservedly so. Lohmann's unofficial title of "Bridge Builder" was earned during his decade as a State Representative. Besides the major role he played in securing the Pekin Bridge (discussed in Transportation), he also was one of the primary movers for the building of the McCluggage Bridge in Peoria. The fact that Lohmann, a Demo-

crat, was so successful in a Republican administration and Legislature speaks for itself.

Moving up, Lohmann sought, and won election to, the Illinois Senate in 1932. There he served for a score of years until his resignation in 1952, most notably as Chairman of the Fish and Game Commission. A conservation advocate before it became popular as a cause, he was the first legislator to sponsor a bill for Spring Lake, which resulted in its being stocked with 25,000 fish. He also sponsored Senate Bill 247 which, in 1943, appropriated \$150,000 to the Department of Public Works for the purchase of lands and waters for public hunting and fishing.

A third major area for which Lohmann is oft-praised is his work in the building of the state highway system. It was Marty who successfully attached an amendment to a bill which resulted in the construction of Route 121 from Lincoln to East Peoria—quite a “super highway” in its time.

Retired from politics today, but still spry and active at age 93, this man routinely puts in a 10-hour day in his insurance office at 516 Court Street, and remains a veritable walking encyclopedia of political knowledge.



*This small building, located at Court and 10th Streets has served in a variety of capacities since it was originally dedicated to the city in the early 1900's as a polling place.*

The 1930s, like so many of the decades before it, was a paradox in that Pekin grew and improved in many respects, yet there was a severe depression and that ever-recurring violence. Despite the stock market crash of 1929, the following year found the city opening a new bridge, building an addition to the hospital, and undertaking major street paving projects—hardly the kind of start one might expect for a decade of depression.

On the other hand, the grain market collapsed, and corn was selling here for five cents a bushel; many farmers found it more economical to burn their yields for fuel than to sell it and buy coal. Unemployment was quite high, causing a crisis in local government, since there were insufficient funds for relief purposes. As the period of depression deepened, cooperation between organized labor and the Association of Commerce brought about a program whereby tradesmen slashed their hourly rates and the Association went on a door-to-door campaign in an effort to get residents to remodel and improve their homes. The program was successful for a time. Intimidated by rumors of collapse, depositors began to withdraw their money from local banks, taking much-needed cash out of circulation.

Through it all, there remained the violence. Sammy Wade, a notorious underworld figure from Pekin was shot and killed in a gunfight near Highland in 1930. Pekin Police Officer George Ziebold shot and killed alleged Canton burglar John Miller after a rooftop chase across downtown buildings. There were several murder and manslaughter cases, three convictions are recorded for manslaughter and two people were given life sentences here for murder.

After a maternal witness named Martin Virant was found dead in his cell at the Tazewell County Jail, there was a storm of public outrage which nearly resulted in the lynching of some accused deputy sheriffs. They were subsequently tried for manslaughter on charges that Virant died under the “third degree.” There was an effort to impeach the entire Sheriff's office by the County Board.

On June 9, 1933, machine-gun-carrying bandits robbed a Herget Bank messenger of \$10,000 in broad daylight across from the Post Office. In July of the following year, Pekin Police, acting on orders of Mayor Russell and with full approval of the City Council, chased a group of Communist organizers out of the city.

Pekin also became involved in a national battle between the United Mine Workers and the Progressive Miners of America. Two pickets were shot when they

appeared in front of a home on Fifth Street in the fall of 1932; at one time 450 miners literally invaded the city; a home at 1308 Charlotte was penetrated by gunfire on October 24, 1932; and almost a year later a home at 353 Ann Eliza was bombed.

On the brighter side, by contrast, Roosevelt's New Deal had some immediate effects here. The NRA codes for Pekin industry were credited with creating 321 new jobs; the repeal of prohibition signaled the start of a tremendous building program at the American Distillery; the City Council proceeded to license taverns and at the same time outlaw the use of the word "saloon." There also came corn loans for farmers, and the grain market began to rise, with wheat finally getting up to \$1.00 per bushel.

Despite this seeming prosperity, Tazewell County reported on January 2, 1936, that it had only enough relief money to last through January 15. At that time, it listed 500 families still on relief. It should be noted, however, that there were 2,300 persons registered in the local branch of the national re-employment office, indicating that many without work were not on the relief rolls.

Early 1936 brought Pekin into national headlines, as a strike at the American Distillery finally resulted in the declaration of an all-union "holiday" by the Trades and Labor Assembly on February 4. The action was dubbed by New York papers as a "general strike," one of the first ever called in the United States. There were some violence and gunfire associated with the month-long strike, which was ultimately settled on February 7. Although there was no pay raise given, the company did agree to recognize the AFL, return strikers to their former positions (the entire incident was initiated when an employee was fired, then re-hired at a lower position), establish seniority rights, and set up eight-hour work days and 40-hour work weeks, with time and a half pay for overtime.

Other side-lights on the period can be read into the newspaper account of a Pekin man who took a carnival promoter to court, not on charges that his show was lewd, but rather that the carnival girl did not go "all the way" as promised, without an extra charge. The plaintiff had asked for his 10 cent admission charge back and got a slap in the face instead. The carnival promoter was assessed a five dollar fine for the slap; no reference was made to the show.

The entire decade had been a stormy one for the City Council, with continuing debates over the question of zoning—an idea that some young upstart Commissioner by the name of Everett Dirksen was

propagating. Also, there was constant controversy over the installation of parking meters in the downtown area.

Still, Pekin prospered in spite of it all. The decade ended with the construction of a \$320,000 sewage disposal plant. The population had taken another sizable jump and in 1940 stood at 19,407.

But before moving on to the 1940's, it is appropriate to mention another Pekin man who distinguished himself in the Illinois General Assembly and became widely known as a friend of the working man—Robert H. Allison. Born in the East, Allison, as a young man, lost an arm in a coal mining accident in Pennsylvania. He received a law degree from Washington University in St. Louis before coming to Pekin to set up practice. Many Pekinites remember his incredible ability to play softball (the outfield, no less) with only one arm.

But it is his legislative record that we wish to consider here. First elected in 1935, Allison served 20 years in the General Assembly, representing the then-30th District. He was Chairman of the Public Aid Committee, and Secretary of the Illinois Legislative Council (a research committee which investigated the mechanics of other state systems in order to recommend improvements in Illinois' government). Most of all, though, he was identified with passage of various Workmen's Compensation Laws, something taken for granted by most workers today. He also sponsored State Credit Union legislation. The hard-working Republican died at the age of 65, shortly after his retirement in 1959.

The dawn of the 1940's found Pekin a restless city. War had been declared in Europe, and despite a general appeasement approach in this country (school teachers in this city were instructed not to even mention war, guns, etc.) everyone somehow seemed to sense that the United States would ultimately become involved, although not in the way we finally did. The principal events here at home before America's entry into the war were the adoption of Daylight Savings Time in 1940; the initial draft registration of 2,715 signers that fall; and the beginning of draft operations by volunteer ex-servicemen R. J. Mattheessen, Jonas Larson, and George Ehrlicher.

Also that year, Communist Party members seeking to give out literature were mobbed on Pekin streets, and two of their cars were overturned and burned. They finally sought refuge in the County Jail. In "grateful appreciation" for their safety, they later filed suit against Sheriff Guy Donahue, who had probably saved their lives.

The city's general restlessness came to a head with the bombing of Pearl Harbor in 1941, and the next four years found Pekin—like every other city in America—concerned first and foremost with the war effort. This all-out concern is discussed in the Catastrophes Unit. Post-war Pekin, as might be expected, was a booming town. Veterans returning home brought a new vigor and spirit to an already limited city. The last five years of the decade produced phenomenal growth that has continued to the present.

Before moving on to Pekin's last twenty-five years, it seems appropriate to take some time to lend up a myth that has plagued Pekin's good name for decades. Though Pekin was settled primarily by persons originally from the British Isles, who came here by way of Virginia, Kentucky, Ohio, and other American places, the community is a well-woven mold of many ethnic elements. Name nearly any anthropological group or nationality and they or their descendants live or work in the city.

From the strong influx of immigrants, the "Celestial City" has developed two dominant national influences. The Germanic culture arrived here in the 1840's, and its influence on the community has been discussed throughout this book. One portion of the city is referred to as "Beantown" yet today by many residents who remember the "Bohnen ferte!" nickname given it because of the high percentage of German residents.

In the 1890's there came another group which has left a strong impact upon the area. Italians from all the several sub-cultures of that nation also congregated initially in one part of town—near the mines where many of them found employment. The East Bluff has only since the depression lost its distinctly Italian flavor—and, regrettably, even Bocci Ball seems to have fallen to the growing homogeneity of the community.

But one ethnic element important in earlier generations has slowly become "invisible." Blacks came to this town by at least 1850 in the person of Nancy, the employee of the Cromwells discussed in the Overview, and many are mentioned throughout the long period ending after World War I. They had difficulties here, but not the kind of troubles the myth-makers would have us believe.

The principal problem was the necessity of learning the German language—a barrier to many whites during the same period. Another drawback was the Blacks' lack of skills, an inevitable problem in an era in which most of them remained uneducated. Nevertheless, they found jobs and homes for their families

in the frontier community. According to *Life in Illinois*, Nancy, a slave girl, lived the *first* Black family in Pekin; a person about thirty years after the celebrated Supreme Court appeal argued by A. L. Lincoln.

By 1845 the first free family of Blacks—Shirman and the Peter Lee family of four—also with their father's other Black family in the town. The family of Charles Crumba and John Winslow appear in the census of 1855, as does Benjamin Cady. During the Civil War, no less than a Black from Pekin served in various elements of the Union Army, including private Thomas Shirman of Company D, 24th United States Colored Infantry, who was killed in combat near Hatchers Run, Virginia, on March 31, 1865.

The post-war amendments to the United States Constitution and the new 1870 Constitution of Illinois brought about new openness for the Blacks. Schools and voting were opened to them. The legendary former Sheriff, hero of the Mexican American War, William A. Finney (says Chapman in 1879), distinguished himself in his old days by being the first white man in Pekin to lead a Negro to the polls to vote. "Unfortunately, we cannot determine which black resident it was who voted."

Dozens of others, with both good and poor reputations, lived in Pekin through the years. Anderson Blue, James Lane, and other names appear. James Arnold Washington Lincoln Jackson, Gibson was the mascot of Company G, 5th Illinois Infantry of the Spanish-American War; and a veteran of that conflict, Howard Oliver, returned to Pekin in 1902 to marry Miss Cora Hoy.

Then there was "Rastus" Games. He is fondly remembered by older citizens as the cheerful, business-like porter of the old Lazewell Hotel. As the Reverend Rastus Games, he made his mark as an evangelist in both Pekin and Peoria. Says one who knew him at the turn of this century, "He was uneducated, but within his abilities, he could give a good talk and could get his message across. While we kidded him a lot, we liked him a great deal."

Sam Day, Al Oliver, the families of McIlroy, Houston, and Good are names which can yet be recalled by the elder citizens of present-day Pekin. Walter Lee was for many years the masseur at the Pekin Hospital, and for a time had a private practice in the Arcade Building. Many others have come and gone.

Why is there now this tear in the ethnic fabric of Pekin? Pure economics. When the depression bore down on everyone in the thirties, many persons lost savings, jobs, housing—everything. Black or white

they had to *allegiate up* with friends *and* later *to* make ends meet. Even though the language barrier no longer exists, and the myths about Pekin's attitudes have been proven false, Blacks simply have not returned to again add their contribution to the cultural richness of the city which was among the first to recognize them as partners in the progress of an expanding community.

We begin now our consideration of Pekin's last 25 years through a discussion of a number of distinguished citizens whose careers have greatly influenced the community's development. Because of the impact of their contributions to city government, much insight into the community's recent development can be gained by considering their roles. We will attempt to remain objective in our presentation of these figures, but we urge future historians to reassess this last 25 years in a new light after more time has passed. At least they will have better records from which to work.

One of the most influential Pekinites in the city's history was born April 6, 1902, to Mr. and Mrs. John H. Shade, and named John Norman Shade. Through the years his name has been put down variously as John Norman, John N., J.N., and J. Norman—the last one being used almost exclusively in recent years. Friends have always called him Norm; we couldn't print what political foes have called him. But to most of Pekin's citizens for the last 30 years, he has been "Mayor Shade."

For more than three decades he has exerted his leadership by force of personality, an immense popularity with people, and a thorough knowledge of government. On impulse he invites anyone he meets to have coffee and pie. He tips waitresses generously. When he was Mayor, secretaries in various offices where he dropped in were showered with gifts. For years at Christmas he would load his car with gifts which he delivered to friends. He gave *bagna calda* suppers, sent flowers to funeral homes, and took people for rides in his cars (which he always buys from the Beres Company). And for years, he sent slim new pennies on postcards to newborn babies.

Phrases which crop up frequently in his conversation and speeches include "sincere and conscientious endeavor," "my humble estimation," "God willing," "it has been called to my attention," "best little city in the Middle West," "these less fortunate people," and "gentlemen of the press."

Some say the success of Shade was a direct product of American hero worship, where loyalties are personified, implying that he approximated Pekinites' inter-

ests and values and did their succeeding for them. Others equate his success with numbers, maintaining that the number of votes he would receive in a given election could be directly correlated with the number of letters he mailed out and the amount of his monthly floral bills. In 1952 when *Life Magazine* had a feature article on Shade, one of the pictures showed him looking through some of the 4,500 letters he received from servicemen.

His popularity outside of Pekin? In 1961, as Mayor, he decided to see his former colleagues in the State Legislature about passing a special bill to allow Pekin to raise the tax rates without a referendum; 130 representatives co-sponsored his bill. (There are a total of 177, and it takes 89 to pass a piece of legislation.)

Unsuccessful in his initial attempt as Mayor in 1935, Shade was elected first in 1939. He was re-elected in '43, '47, and '51, resigned in '54 to spend two terms in the State Legislature, was re-elected to Mayor in '59 and '63, and resigned again in '66 to spend four more years in Springfield. A Republican by label, he is a conservative in practice. He liked to move forward slowly while preserving what he considered the



Between them, J. Norman Shade (left) and Martin B. Lohmann have compiled over 80 years of political representation and service to Pekin.





virtually no previous experience in politics. Yet, he was named the outstanding freshman Senator in his first stint in Springfield. For 20 years Groen served the people of Pekin (and a total of nine counties) under five different governors. He was a member of the Pension Laws Commission for 18 years, for 16 of which he served as its Chairman. In addition, Groen saw duty on 26 other major Study Commissions, served on every major committee in the Senate, and chaired five of them.

Groen was directly responsible for the passage of many public improvement bills, most notably in this area, the initial legislation for the new Pekin Bridge and the restoration of Spring Lake State Park. The *Chicago Daily News*, now known for their praise of Republicans, stated in an editorial in the mid-60's that Groen was "responsible for the passage of more good legislation and the defeat of more bad legislation than any other Senator. He is one of the few who actually sways colleagues' votes by his logic and oratory."

Many people were, frankly, surprised when Groen announced his retirement in 1972. He was then the Senior Senator in a Republican-dominated body, and seemed to have things pretty much his own way. His retirement gave rise to much speculation as to his health, personal problems, etc., but today he seems quite content with his law practice and remains active in community affairs.

The last two figures to be mentioned in this section attained national prominence. The first of them is John T. McNaughton, born in November of 1921, a son of *Pekin Times* publisher and Mrs. E. F. McNaughton. A graduate of Pekin High School at the age of 16, John went on to distinguish himself in both government and academics.

After graduating Phi Beta Kappa from DePauw University in 1942, he was commissioned an ensign in the U. S. Navy, where he served with much distinction through World War II. At one time McNaughton led a skeleton crew on a torpedoed Liberty ship, bringing the vessel to port safely after the Captain had abandoned the craft as a hopeless cause.

Upon his discharge in 1945, John married the former Sally Fulkman, a classmate at DePauw and also a Navy officer, and entered Harvard Law School, graduating with highest honors in 1948. He then returned to Pekin where his first and only surviving son, Alex, was born.

John was named a Rhodes Scholar, and studied for two years in England at Oxford. From there, he became a close aid to Presidential Assistant Averell Har-

man and worked in Paris on the Marshall Plan.

Returning again to Pekin in 1951, he edited the *Pekin Daily Times* for a brief period and was a Democratic candidate for Congress in 1952, losing to incumbent Harold Velde in the Eisenhower landslide victory.

McNaughton returned to Harvard as an Associate Professor of Law in 1954. His second son, Ted, was born in July of 1955 in Boston. During the next several years, John continued his teaching duties at Harvard, being named a full professor in 1957, specializing in evidence and international law. In addition, he served as an Assistant District Attorney in Boston and was named to revise Wigmore's *Evidence in Trials at Common Law*, the "Bible" of legal evidence.

When the Kennedy Administration took office in 1961, John was called to Washington and named Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense, and in May of 1962, he was appointed General Counsel for the Defense Department. During this period he was quite involved in the formulation of policy regarding the Cuban Missile Crisis and the Berlin Wall conflict.

After Kennedy's assassination in 1963, Lyndon Johnson retained McNaughton, and he was appointed Assistant Secretary of Defense for International Security Affairs. It was in this capacity, early in 1964, that McNaughton went to Russia and worked on the Nuclear Test Ban Treaty.

Still moving upward, McNaughton was named Secretary of the Navy, being confirmed by the Senate on June 29, 1967. He was to assume official duties on August 1 of that year.

But tragedy struck in the interim. On July 19, 1967, John, Sally, and younger son, Ted, were killed in the crash of a Piedmont Airlines plane in Hendersonville, North Carolina, on a flight to Washington, D. C. All are buried in Arlington National Cemetery, having been given a full military funeral attended by the President and most of the high-ranking government officials.

It is altogether fitting and proper that we close this section on Government with a discussion of, whatever else he may have been, Pekin's most noted political figure on a national level: Everett McKinley Dirksen. His is the type of Horatio Alger story that people point to as proof positive that in America, anyone can become anything he wants. And in considering Dirksen's humble beginnings and his rise to national prominence and leadership, about the only argument that one could put up in opposition would be to point to all those who tried but didn't make it.

Antje Conradi Ailts Dirksen, born in Loquard, Germany, came to America in 1874, unable to speak a word of English and with a sign hanging from her neck indicating her destination. Her first husband, Bernhard Ailts, died in 1892, leaving her with two sons, John and Henry. Antje's second husband was John F. Dirksen, also a native German, who had come to Pekin to pursue his trade as a painter at the Smith Wagon Works. The Dirksens, conservative, industrious, "old-country" Germans were staunch Republicans, which accounts for the names they chose for their sons: Benjamin Harrison, and the twins, Everett McKinley and Thomas Reed.

When the elder Dirksen died of a stroke in 1905, Antje assumed the task of head of the house. She held the family together taking in washings, sewing, and working the soil on their block and land around their home at 12th and Hamilton Streets. The family kept six cows, hogs, chickens, and a horse. The boys rose very early in the mornings, milked the cows, delivered the milk daily to the old Central House Hotel, and then put the remaining milk in buckets which they hung over a notched broom handle and went through the neighborhood in "Beantown" (a predominantly German settlement on the near-north side of Pekin) selling the milk before heading for school. They weeded and hoed the garden and sold the vegetables.

Hardly a silver spoon beginning. After high school, Everett studied liberal arts at the University of Minnesota, working his way through by selling medical books and sometimes sleeping in a farmer's barn. He then attended the Law School at the University for a year and a half.

He quit school to join the Army as a private in 1918, where he served in the balloon corps, manning the hot aircraft some 3,000 feet up, spotting artillery targets. He was discharged 17 months later, having reached the rank of Lieutenant. A series of jobs followed, including his work at the Dirksen Brothers Wholesale Bakery. As a budding young actor, Everett landed the lead role of Prince in Percy MacKaye's *A Thousand Years Ago* at the Pekin Centennial Celebration of 1924. The Princess to whom he lost his heart was played by Luella Carver, who won his heart off-stage, too. They were married in the Carver home in 1927.

Dirksen had taken his first plunge into politics that year, winning election to the City Council. Many thought him a bit daff when he proposed some new idea of his called "zoning" in the late '20's. The zoning ordinance finally adopted in the middle 1960's

beats striking resemblance to Dirksen's original idea—he was just about 35 years ahead of his time. In 1929, the Dirksens' daughter, Joy, was born, and Everett had determined on a career in politics.

In 1930, foregoing the usual stepping stones of local and state offices on a road to federal office, Dirksen ran for Congress, but was narrowly defeated by incumbent William Hull of Peoria. A Peoria paper editorial of the day remarked, "Hull was opposed by a remarkable young man. That he came so close to victory is a tribute to his ability as an orator, his good nature, and his unbounded energy. He has arrived."

That writer should have been given the "Proprietor of the Year Award." When Everett ran again for Congress in 1932, the year Democrat Franklin Roosevelt was swept into office taking a sizable number of Democratic Representatives with him, Dirksen won every county in the District. And the rest is history. He served eight straight terms in the House of Representatives, stepping down in 1948 because of an eye problem. One doctor had told him he would lose his sight and urged removal of the eye to avoid further complications.

Pressed for a decision, Dirksen recalled, "I got down on my knees and uttered my prayer, whether blindness would be my lot." When he told the specialist, "I guess not, I found my answer," the doctor inquired "Whom did you see?"

Dirksen replied, "I called on the Big Doctor. The Big Doctor upstairs, and the answer is no."

After more than a year of rest and a "miraculous recovery," Dirksen set out for what seemed to be the impossible—the United States Senate seat held by Majority Leader Scott Lucas. Lucas was considered to be unbeatable, and there wasn't any long line of Republicans waiting to take him on. Frankly, many party officials considered Dirksen merely token opposition. Dirksen's upset victory immediately catapulted him into national prominence and began a tenure of nearly 19 years in the United States Senate, the last 10 as Minority Leader.

Constantly plagued by physical disabilities, including a painful pinched nerve in his back, ulcers, a kidney ailment, and emphysema, Dirksen worked hard at staying on top of things and leading his Party, routinely rising at 5:30 a.m. and often working through the wee hours of the morning. He was one of the last of the band-stand, flag-waving orators who, with throaty, almost Victorian-style eloquence could hold audiences captive for hours as he extolled the virtues of motherhood, patriotism, Godliness, and of course, margolds. In his later years, he was reported to be

the most sought-after speaker in the country.

His conduct in public service during the middle 1960's, particularly his political mastery as he collected the necessary votes in Congress to pass the Civil Rights Act and his unwavering support and leadership in the passage of the Nuclear Test Ban Treaty, led a *Life* magazine reporter to say of the Senator, "In recent years he has responded less and less to narrowly partisan or regional considerations and has come to concern himself with the deep moral issues of the time." This book would be less than honest if it did not point out that this lack of "regional considerations" cost Dirksen some support at home—but not on a national level.

Yet, Dirksen maintained, "All the major decisions of my life have been made here (Pekin). This is my native city, where the family taproot goes deep, and it will ever be so." "Are you in the autumn of your career?" a newsman asked the Senator in late 1967.

Dirksen replied in his measured way, "I go on as I do, I go on as I do because I live as if I'll die tomorrow and I plan as if I'll live forever."

Nobody lives forever, and that tomorrow came for the colorful Dirksen on Sunday, September 7, 1969. In failing health, Dirksen had to make what turned out to be the last decision of thousands—to have ma-

jor surgery to correct his respiratory condition. He entered Walter Reed Hospital on August 31, had the surgery, fought a brave fight for life, but was unable to reach even a compromise with his last opponent—death.

His son-in-law, Senator Howard Baker, delivered a eulogy during services in the Capitol rotunda. The last few paragraphs of that tribute are printed here as a fitting close to the discussion of Everett McKinley Dirksen in particular and the general topic of Government in general:

He knew first hand the melting pot of America. Its diversity, and its hardship, the brilliance of its people, going about the business of forging a magnificent nation. And he loved them, all of them, and few are privileged to love so well. And I think the people saw something of their own greatness in Everett Dirksen. And they understood him and respected him for it.

He was an idealist. But he was a realist as well. And in the end he chose calmly to risk his life, electing uncertain surgery in order to gain the opportunity to love and serve better. And he lost.

But in losing he fixed with permanence, the image of a noble man of the people.



President Richard M. Nixon and his wife Pat came to Pekin for the cornerstone-laying of the Dirksen library complex.

# 12

## *Pekin Today*

The following compilation of material is included to incorporate into this book some important people and facts which simply did not fit elsewhere and to serve as a basis for comparison and recollection in future years.

### *Community Data*

The city of Pekin, with an estimated 1974 population of 35,500, encompasses an area of approximately eight square miles. Within the city limits there are 120 miles of paved and black-topped streets. The altitude, as measured from the first floor of the court house, is 482 feet above sea level. Federal highways serving the city include Interstate 74, 10 miles to the north, and Interstate 474, scheduled for completion this year, located five miles to the north. Also, U.S. Highway 24 serves Pekin to the west, across the bridge. State Highways running through or near the city include Routes 9, 29, 98, and 121.

The mean annual temperature in Pekin is 50.3 degrees Fahrenheit; winter temperatures average 25.4 degrees, while summer months average 73 degrees. Average annual precipitation is 34.49 inches, average yearly snowfall is 21.7 inches.

The present Pekin Fire Department, under the leadership of Chief Charles F. Hudson, consists of 45 paid firemen, manning 16 pieces of equipment, including two 85-foot aerial trucks, one with a 750-gallon-per-minute pump attached. There are presently three fire stations, with the Central Station located at city hall. Two recently built substations,

one at 14th and Willow Streets and the second at 272 Derby, will be joined in the near future by a third station to serve the East Bluff area, located in recently annexed city property at Entrance Drive and Route 9. All of this has brought about an insurance classification by the Illinois Inspection Bureau of 4, which is the lowest in this area, matched only by Peoria. Last year the department responded to 785 calls.

Today's residents are protected by 41 full-time policemen, headed by Chief George Harris. Seven squad cars, six marked and one unmarked, patrol the city 24 hours per day; in addition, the department maintains one three-wheel motorcycle. All vehicles are equipped with two-way radios, and the department itself has statewide communication equipment. Over 2,500 arrests were made in 1973; it should be noted, however, that more than half of these were for traffic violations.

Also serving 1974 Pekin is a Civil Defense unit, organized and accredited in 1958. Activated sections, in accordance with National Plans, total 21, 500 trained volunteers stand ready for emergency situations, and the Control Center is in city hall. Over the years Pekin residents have grown accustomed to hearing the wailing of the Civil Defense siren on the first Tuesday of each month, when the warning system is tested. Reverend Hubert Entwistle heads the operation.

Property taxes are assessed at 55% of appraised value; the average home in Pekin is appraised at \$25,000; thus taxes would be levied per \$100 on that home on the basis of a valuation of \$13.750. A table of tax com-

parisons for recent years follows:

	1967	1970	1973
City	1,0049	1,2022	1,4992
County	.1686	.2064	.2473
Township (Pekin)	.0688	.1406	.0293
School (108 and 303)	2,9438	3,0239	2,9003
Junior College (CC)	.2140	.2650	.2410
Pekin Park	.1869	.3080	.2314
Totals	4,5870	5,1461	5,1515

As of June 1, 1974, the following elected officials serve the city of Pekin in the capacities listed:

*State Officials, 45th Legislative District:*

Senator, Roger Sommer; State Representatives, James Von Boeckman and John Kriegsmann.

*City Officials:*

Mayor, William Waldmeier; City Councilmen, Wilard Birkenmeier, Francis Oberle, William York, and Henry Vander Heyden; City Clerk, William D. Jansen; City Treasurer, Claude Smith.

*Pekin Township Officials:*

Township Supervisor, Albert C. Schilling; Township Clerk, Al Gasper; Township Assessor, Paul K. Lohman; Township Highway Commissioner, Donald Bay-singer; Township Auditors, Leo Berardi, Richard

Elkins, Landell Howard, and Phil Strand.

*Pekin Community High School Board, District 303:* President, Julian Smith; Members, Charles Burson, Jack Lowman, Donald Martin, Paul Shields, Dr. Dennis Stoller, and Melvin Wood.



*It's a long way from night sticks, whistles, and chin helmets to automatic weapons, sophisticated communication equipment, and radar. This 1905 squad provides a distinct contrast to the modern department pictured below and at right.*



#### *Pekin Grade School Board, District 108*

President, Melvin Thompson; Members, Dr. Joseph Amone, Betty Bower, Terry Hutchison, Frederick Meyers, Ed Moehle, and Joseph Switzer

#### *Pekin Park Board*

President, Paul N. Luft, Vice president, Kenley Cordts; Members, Lloyd Eertmoed, Tim G. Soldwedel, and John B. Walker

#### *Library Board* (appointed by the Mayor)

President, Josephine Juban; Members, Melvin Burling, Reverend Roy B. Davis, Vera Dille, Nelson Edgings, Josephine Goldsmith, Richard Lashbrook, and Elizabeth Schramm (Note: This is a nine-member board, but at this writing, one vacancy exists.)

*Pekin Hospital Board of Trustees* (elected by members of the corporation): President, Dale Sarver; Vice president, Henry Vander Heyden; Secretary, Walter Zuerhorst; Treasurer, Ralph Heim; Directors, Leonard Brueckner, Vardner Eden, Norman Jansen, Albert A. Martens, Tilford Olson, Frederick Velde, Albert Weston, and Howard Williams.

Another vital part of our community is the professional man, specifically those in law and medicine. The following lists are, we believe, up to date as of June 1, 1974.

#### *The Legal Profession*

The following judges work and reside within the city of Pekin: Carl O. Davies, Arthur Gross, James D. Heiple, William Reardon, and Ivan L. Yontz. State's Attorney: C. Brett Bode.

#### *Practicing Pekin Attorneys*

Thomas M. Atherton, J. Peter Ault, I. R. Bagley, John A. Bernard, Alfred W. Black, James R. Brodie, Arthur N. Christie, Robert A. Clevenger, Vernon Burns Dorman, Louis P. Dunkelberg, Nathan I. Elliff, C. V. Frings, I. B. Groen, Keith C. Groen, A. Rodney Hallberg, Richard G. Hayes, Paul Johnston, Ronald I. Keyser, Harold H. Kuhfuss, W. Elad Kuhfuss, Robert L. Metzler, Edward C. Moehle, William F. Morris, Bernard I. Oltman, Ben F. Railsback, John Ritchie, Harold I. Rust, Gerald Smith, Roth S. Smith, Roger Sommer, Dale I. Sutton, Charles R. Thomas, Richard P. Wherry, and Gene F. Zimmwalt.

#### *Practicing Pekin Physicians and Surgeons*

David W. Bailey, V. G. Baysinger, A. H. Claycomb, Gordon Colson, W. W. Cutter Jr., William H. Fraley, Rudolf V. Grimmer, James C. Hanley, R. A. Helden, Albert J. Martens, Yvonne S. Martens, Donald I. Mitselfelt, Charles A. Nelson, R. G. Rhoades, H. B. Shepard, John B. Sombbeck, R. K. Taubert, F. A. Torrey, Terry O. Tosi, Rudolf J. Urban, J. I. Weimer, W. B. Werner, R. C. Wherry, Nelson A. Wright Jr., and Nelson A. Wright III.

#### *Practicing Pekin Dentists*

J. A. Amone, L. D. Ashby, David L. Danner, Robert R. Ehrlich, Ward A. Just, W. C. Morgan, Norman W. Riopell, C. H. Shawgo, Dennis K. Stoller, Gerald W. Stonecipher, George K. Thomas, D. W. Wilcox, and Robert F. Williamson.



## Epilogue

As Peking nears its 151st year, it seems tempting to write some sort of prophetic outlook for the future. Such an attempt, though, would be doomed for at least two good reasons: (1) The yellow pages have no entry under "prophets" and (2) an overview of a 150-year history does not seem to be an appropriate place for such an undertaking.

Suffice it to say that many people have many plans and dreams, some of which will be realized and others of which will be abandoned or lost. There has always been (and must always be) in any society a discrepancy between ideals and realities. Such is the stuff that growth and progress are made of.

Someone remarked, during the compilation of this book, that "the people who *really* made Peking what it is today will never be mentioned."

While it would be hard to accept that statement as an absolute, there is much validity to it in a general way. Thus, the only bit of prophecy that will be offered here is a paraphrase of that statement. Many of the people who will make Peking what it is to become in future years will go unmentioned in recorded history. But they will still do the job.

This book is a kind of tribute to a few. This epilogue, though small in size, is an even greater tribute to those unheralded history-makers, past, present, and future. May you find your just rewards in other ways.



*The following people contributed information, materials, photos, and numerous other items which enabled us to produce this book*

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Eva Layer  
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Juanita Moreland  
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